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Contemporary Music:
An Encounter with John Rea

**Ethnicity as
Post-Modernism**



Il Nuovo Barocco
Le mythe de l'ailleurs

Strangers' Fugue:
An Interview with Aldo Mazza

Vice Versa

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Read Mary Melfi

A Bride in Three Acts



and A Queen Is Holding a Mummified Cat



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AN ENCOUNTER



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After two years of publication, primarily within the Montreal context, we thought the time had come to move outside Quebec and link our reflections with the wider Canadian spectrum. Vice-Versa is a bi-monthly magazine published in Montreal since 1983. It covers literature, social criticism and the arts free from academic concerns; what characterizes its way of viewing things is an open, non-ideological approach that we call «transcultural». You will notice it in the magazine's choice of topics, in its trilingualism, and in the names of its editorial staff and contributors. In Vice Versa, we meet at a cross-roads of various cultural universes, a shifting perspective whose boundaries are as wide as those of emigration.

Vice-Versa is not only an instrument of change, but a product of the profound transformations that our society is undergoing.

These are just a few reasons why we think Vice-Versa deserves your attention. And more than that, we hope you will adopt it as your magazine.□

Read

Fulvio Caccia

Irpinia

□

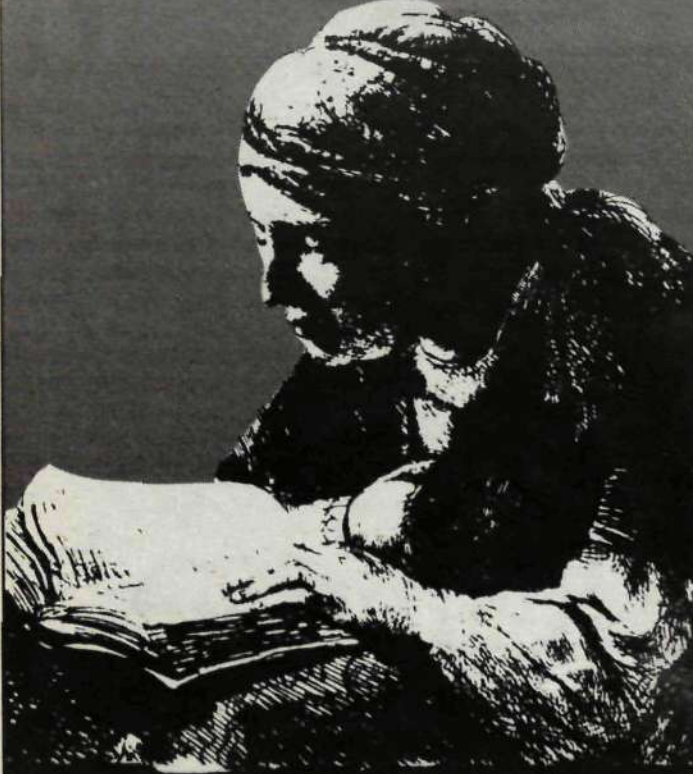
Filippo Salvatore

Suns of Darkness

□

Antonio D'Alfonso

Black Tongue



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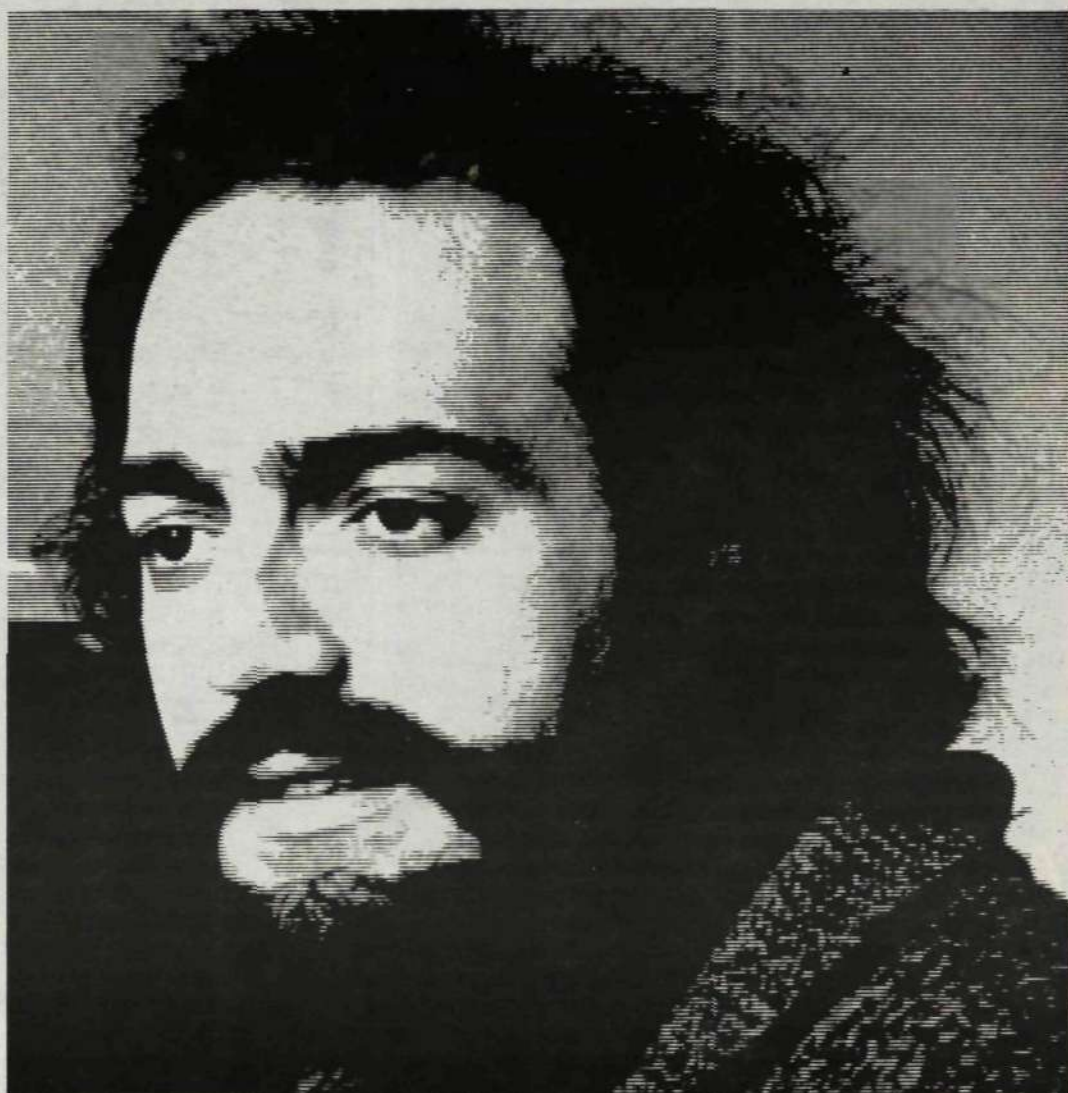
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P.O. Box 821, Station N.D.G.,
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An Encounter with John Rea, Musician

by Laurence Cohen

His music? Veritable sound paintings, the interplay of structures and forms. From opera to electronic music, his works display great variety. According to him, it is with chamber and orchestral music that his message comes across best. In *Com-possession*, he succeeded in creating a 20th century tarantella, a work which, at present, remains the only "detour" into his past — into the Italian Mezzogiorno, land of his parents. "When I wrote this piece," he says, "I understood those words of Jean Cocteau: The more a poet sings inside his genealogical tree, the more he sings in tune. But as I see it, the more he sings, the more he cannot help but sing inside his genealogical tree." Being a painter of sounds, Rea has often been inspired by pictorial works: *Hommage à Vasarely* (1977), an optical/kinetic-like work whose topological distribution of orchestral instruments alludes to similar visual grids in the works of Vasarely *Treppenmusik* 1982, making reference to the paradoxical staircases — ascents and descents to somewhere/nowhere — and other strange configurations found in the graphic works of M.C. Escher, where time develops its own consonance beyond our Euclidian logic; and recently, *Spin* (1984), a quintet inspired by two tableaux of British artist, Peter Sedgley — using the same rhythms (4 minute cycles) of kinetic objects made from mirrors, filters and light projections. Rea often plays with words as with the palindromes in *Prologue, Scene and Movement*, or juxtaposes them with sounds as in the spoken-opera *Le Petit Livre des Ravalet*. Sometimes his compositions evoke myths: *The Prisoners Play*, an opera; *The Days*, a ballet; *La Dernière Sirène* (The Last Siren), a trio. At other times, they reflect a kind of orientalism. From his travels to Asia (Indonesia, Japan, China), he has retained a certain point of view. He says that *Médiator* (Plectrum) is a friendly attempt at communication between musical instruments of our tradition and certain sounds and gestures of East Asian musics. *Reception and Offering Music*, a work which uses expressly the context of Tibetan ritual music, pays homage by way of musical quotations to composers such as Mahler, Bach and others, composers who, he says, may be thought of as Buddhas. One finds musical quotations in his work (again in *Treppenmusik* and *La Dernière Sirène*) in the way one might come to a crossroad where past meets present. This kind of multilayering (of live music, of recorded music and of this music sometimes heard again overlapping with the former at the end of a performance) makes one think of the process of wanting to surpass oneself, of magical enchantment, of stretching and contracting the time through which Rea elaborates his musical compositions.



John Rea was born in Toronto, January 14, 1944. After having studied composition in Canada and the United States, he founded in 1978, and in collaboration with José Evangelista, Lorraine Vaillancourt, and the late Claude Vivier, the Montreal contemporary music society "Les Événements du Neuf" (events on the ninth, at nine; novel events). That same year, he participated in founding another society "Traditions Musicales du Monde" which, during its five years of existence, helped Montrealers get to know non-Western music by way of lectures, films and concerts. He has taught music theory and composition at McGill University since 1973. In 1981, he won the Jules Léger Prize for new chamber music with his work *Com-possession*. He has also lectured and written articles on contemporary music. Since 1982, he has been on the board of directors for the Société de musique contemporaine du Québec. Between January and July 1984, he was composer-in-residence at Mannheim, Germany.

Q: You are one of the founding members of "Les Événements du Neuf". For what reasons was the society created?

A.: "Événements du Neuf" was founded seven years ago. In the beginning and as it still does today, the society wished to, as it were, break away. However, without it being a revolutionary act, our goal was to help audiences better know and appreciate different perspectives in 20th century music.

The key word here is "perspective": to listen, to see, to consider an object from differing angles. It often involves

the rediscovery of a musical or visual object which one thought exhausted or empty. This is our modest contribution in the field of contemporary aesthetics.

Picasso, at the beginning of this century, painted works whose images result from the superimposition of many vanishing points. There is a similar procedure at work in our wish to listen to music by way of many perspectives, many vanishing points.

It helps one's appreciation and enhances, if I may say so, one's aesthetic pleasure.

Q: The place where you give concerts changes with

each event.

A.: Yes, for the most part, because it helps perception. When the place changes, the environmental context changes and, consequently, so do the visual and acoustical perspectives. Instead of being seated in a traditional hall with a proscenium stage, one might find oneself in another space: in the center, or to the side of a stage or area where the action, the visual object or sonic gesture is unfolding. It also depends on what music we are performing.

Q: It would seem also that the society is interested in breaking down geographical

frontiers as well.

A.: That depends. Each concert has its own inspiration. Five years ago, we presented music of the composers of Les Événements du Neuf: at the time, Vivier, Evangelista and myself.

The concert was entitled "Travel Books". Because our own music had come to show the influence of certain non-Western cultures, we decided to invite our listeners to make a journey with us, albeit an abbreviated one. By way of certain musical examples and texts read between our compositions, we tried to show our audience how it was that we

came to take such aesthetic decisions in our music, to travel "there" rather than "here", so to speak.

Musicians must work with the nationality of sounds, and that's a fact. Why does music sound the way it does? Our compositions tried to explain other musics (Indonesian, Japanese, Chinese), not as a point of departure but rather as a point of reference for our listeners.

Well, these were the perspectives which crossed each other and fused within our own music and within this concert. And, since then, all our concerts have had similar

kinds of things.

Q.: Do you see any differences in the music being produced in Montreal and Toronto?

A.: There are certainly different "feelings": in the compositions, in the way music is performed, in the desire to communicate different states of mind. It's rather incredible! Montreal and Toronto, as distinct as two different countries!

But I think it is necessary to make a distinction between local music and music which tries to go beyond its own borders, that is, a music with sufficient aesthetic tension enabling it to be appreciated elsewhere.

For example, the works of Vivier seem to have this element and are appreciated elsewhere. However, many composers in Toronto and Montreal write music which is so dominated by local circumstances that performances elsewhere are restricted.

Perhaps, it is like those wines which don't travel. And it's not just me who is imagining such a thing: philosophers and aestheticians are in agreement in saying that all art is local art.

Whether it be the local art of Paris, Berlin, London, Rome, Milan, Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver or San Francisco. The music made in New York is not made anywhere else.

I think we can best describe the composers of our time as artisans, not as artists: they do a kind of handicraft work because they stay at home. Local music here and there, a little like local traditions in the making of lace, or playing in a gamelan orchestra.

On the other hand, there does exist what one might call "international music". Mozart's music is a perfect example with its influences of Italian, French and German music.

And he *was* a seasoned traveller. Today, important composers like Berio and Stockhausen are always moving around. If one doesn't have the chance to travel even a little bit, one remains isolated. And for an artist, it is to risk developing a kind of sclerosis produced by one's own environment.

It's really necessary to travel. During the 19th century, for example, English composers had to go to Germany, French composers to Italy. Much earlier, Dutch composers went to Italy to better understand the art of the Renaissance. Today, it's more like the whole world!

Q.: In so far as your music has been played in Europe and elsewhere, would you consider yourself a composer of international music?

A.: I wouldn't say that I am an international composer, but I have had some occasions to present my music overseas: some colleagues have played my music in Germany, in Paris, even in Budapest!

Does that make my music international? I don't know, but I have written some pieces which travel. Others have not.

And I don't want those works to travel either because they do not possess that quality, that density, that tension which would be necessary for their appreciation in Germany, France, Italy or elsewhere.

Q.: And what about the next new generation of composers? You teach at McGill University.

A.: That's a very good question because music is changing from day to day. It is unbelievable. With computers, for example, one can produce a music and a family of sounds which now most of us recognize without difficulty.

Well, these young people in their early twenties take the academic courses and, within six months, possess the tools to produce a music which one might imagine cold and sterile.

But no, it's not the case at all! They have found the means to manipulate the cathode-ray screen in such a way as to compose and realize a music which is quite tactile, sensual and substantial!

It is not an affected music nor is it abstract. For young people no longer are attracted to "weird", cosmic music: they would rather compose something down-to-earth.

I wonder if this is due to the influence of pop-music, encouraging young composers to write music which is more sensual than intellectual. I, for one, don't believe in this dichotomy between sensuality and the intellect. It's a kind of pseudo-argument dear to young people. Well-composed music may be both intellectual as well as sensual.

Twenty years ago, there seemed to be a dichotomy between sterile, intellectual music and music which was romantic and sensual. Today, these categories too have been broken bringing everyone to the point of confusion, a sure sign of aesthetic impotence.

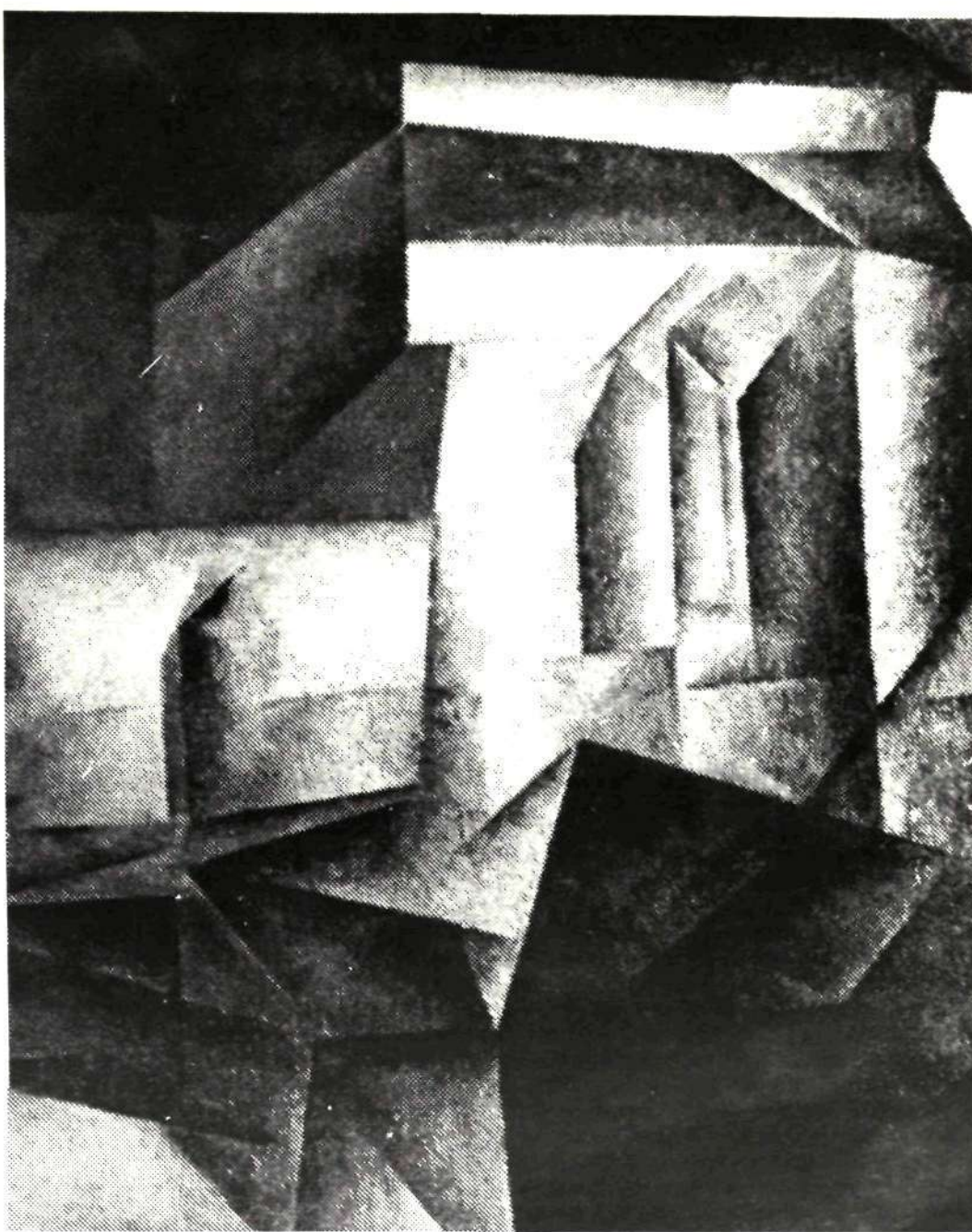
Young composers today have a great deal of liberty: in the extreme, their problem is too much liberty. Someone commissions a young composer to write a new work. So the composer asks himself: duration? I don't know; for what instruments? I don't know; on what subject? I don't know.

You can do almost anything! and that is stressful. For over twenty years now, there has been a lot of research, and still more research in technology. But, surprisingly, that desire to "communicate" with audiences has come back into the artist's thinking as he searches for an aesthetic or poetic framework to which he can relate. It is in this sense that I believe the future to be very promising!

Q.: For whom is contemporary music written? For everyone or for just a few people?

A.: Indeed, that is the question. Not long ago, and for the first time in Canada, a contemporary music festival was held entitled: World Music Days of the International Society for Contemporary Music, the I.S.C.M. The society was founded in 1922 in Austria. Sixty-two years of music and promotion of contemporary music. In 1922, the answer to this question would have been: well, this music is for us, the composers; or for us, the performers; and even for us music lovers (understood to be a very specific class of well-informed people).

But since that time, needless to say everything has changed, especially since the second World War. All the categories



From time to time, if a composer is lucky, he might write music which travels. But, in general, his music remains attached to the local scene/environment, like so many handicrafts in a cottage industry.

have been exploded and music is found everywhere. Distinctions are not as clear cut as they once were and everything seems to overlap.

One used to be able to contrast serious music with popular music, the distance between the two being a vast ocean. But, today, so-called serious composers also write popular music. And composers of "rock" or "punk" submit musical scores which, according to me, are quite informed, serious and weighty both in their philosophical as well as sonorous content.

Especially in the last ten years, these two areas of musical discourse intersect. It's a kind of *no man's land*. To give you an example of what I mean. One day recently while I was searching for my favourite radio station, I happened to hear an announcer say: And now for the disco version of "Let's Go Crazy" by Prince, that month's hit-song.

Well, the singer began to sing. You could hear the punk influence, the rock-n-roll, a little bit of Michael Jackson etc., and all of it quite energetic and very rhythmic. When all of a sudden, during the reprise of the melody, another kind of orchestration appears and Prince shouts — Let's go crazy! Well, this fellow, the composer/arranger of the piece, in order to describe a state of madness, composes two minutes of what seemed to me to be a music as complex as

Schönberg's.

Was this an anecdotal or humouristic sound effect? In any event, the young buyers of this record will be appreciating the music of Schönberg, Boulez and Stockhausen recomposed inside a work by Prince. This may be the first or one of the first times that popular music includes within itself a portion of elaborately composed so-called erudite music.

And the opposite is also true: there are so-called serious composers who exploit the harmonies, colours and harmonic progressions of popular music. What's going on today really is taking place within a *no man's land* between serious and popular music.

Q.: What do you foresee in the future?

A.: I am not a prophet, but I must say that I too have been influenced by many things. My music has become more gentle, which is to say less aggressive than 15 years ago. But imagine 400 years ago, that genius Monteverdi managed two careers: he composed one kind of music for the Church and another kind for the Prince.

He was able to separate the intentions of a work said to be religious from the intentions of a work said to be profane. Well, today, popular music composers work with the same tools, the same instruments as composers of so-called serious music.

One day, a composer may work in one of these two worlds and, on the next, work in the other. This is what I mean when I say *no man's land*.

Following Monteverdi, music evolved to become the product of this mixture of two styles — one for the Church and another for the Prince. I believe that we may be in a similar sort of situation: erudite, concert music — call it sacred if you wish — becoming transformed by popular, profane/secular music. And vice versa.

And then there are other influences which make themselves felt. One may hear, for example, inside the music of Steve Reich the classical musics of the Orient, Asia and Africa. I can say in all honesty that sometimes we composers are often lost: where are we? I happen to live in Montreal.

But, is it necessary to live in Montreal in order to compose our music? A moment ago, I said that everyone writes local music. Well, yes, OK. But, would one be able to compose the exact same sort of music in Paris? Perhaps, perhaps not! Composers here, in Paris, in Germany, in Vancouver, in Japan are all working on this new music with its influences coming from rock-n-roll, oriental music, and so-called serious music. I wonder what our sensibility will be toward such things fifteen years from now? Question mark! □

Zen and the Computer Screen

by Marco Fraticelli

According to the author, the computer may be a tool in the creation of a new form of writing — visual poetry with movement.

To some, the merger of haiku and the computer might seem an incongruous one. How could any two things be more diametrically opposed than that monster of plastic and silicon and those dainty three-line poems from the East? This misconception is based as much on an unfounded mistrust of the computers as it is on a misunderstanding of the haiku form.

A haiku is more than three lines and seventeen syllables. Haiku differs from Western poetry not only in its form, but also in its intent. Traditional Western poetry is much more expository than its Eastern counterpart. The poet attempts to lay bare his thoughts and feelings for the reader to experience.

On the other hand, haiku is less poetry of exposition and more an exercise in experience which serves to constantly remind the poet of the moment in which he finds himself. It is this focus on the present moment that haiku share with Zen. «Now» is the essence of Zen. Haiku may be viewed as a Zen exercise in learning to experience each present instant and, as a by product, to capture it in poetry.

There are still those who prefer to write their haiku on rice paper about lily ponds, plum blossoms and temple bells. In the North American context, these poems have a hollow ring to them. They appear to have been created more for their value as artifact than as the result of a process attempting to deal with the complexities and ironies in which we find ourselves each moment.

In recent years, there have been numerous efforts made to expand the traditionally rigid haiku form. Some poets have been writing haiku of one line, others those of just two words. Another new direction which the haiku has taken in the last few years is into the area of concerts or visual poetry. Within this context, what could seem more logical than the poet's use of the computer to further extend the bounds on the haiku and bring it into the 1980's.

When I first acquired a computer, I was primarily interested in its capabilities as a word processor. My plan was to store all my work on computer disks so that I could then print up copies when I needed them or make corrections without retyping entire pages.

However, I soon became aware of the many other possibilities which the computer presents. One of these possibilities is that of *movement*. The typewritten page is static, whereas the computer offers words that can move. The creation of *Déjà Vu* was not only an attempt on my part to become familiar with the workings of a computer, but also to discover its potential as a tool in the creation of a new form of writing: visual poetry with movement.

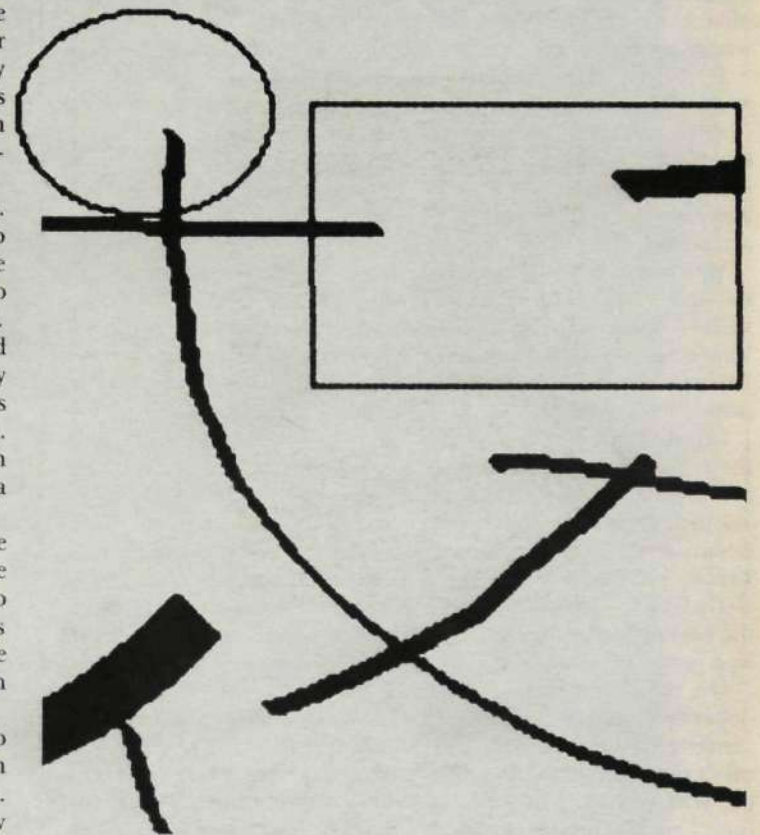
For those who have not had the opportunity to view the disk, it may be a little difficult to imagine what I mean by words moving across the screen. Perhaps a few examples of what is on the disk may help. In one poem, the word «light» appears hundreds of times, flashing and giving the screen the effect of a neon light. Suddenly the screen is blank for a few seconds and then the following words appear:

Power Failure
In the darkness beside me
Your voice

Although the poem itself could have been simply printed on a piece of paper, the dramatic effect created by the flashing light preceding the darkness, could not.

In another poem, the screen is filled with snowflakes falling. Then we read:

Snow flakes
Asleep in the rocking chair
Record player stuck



The snowflakes and the poem scroll up the screen in a jerking movement which simulates and reinforces the hypnotic effect created by a) snowflakes caught in a beam of light b) the constant motion of a rocking chair c) a record skipping over and over.

Besides *motion*, the computer provides the writer with control over the element of *time*. Normally, the poet has no control over the rate at which his poems are read unless he himself is giving a reading. On the computer, this is not so. The writer controls the rate at which words appear or disappear from the screen. He can leave a word or group of words on the screen for a few seconds and then add to them or have them disappear to be replaced by a blank screen on a new phrase. For example, in one of the haiku previously mentioned, these words appear in the center of the screen:

In the darkness

The words remain for several seconds before two more are added:

In the darkness beside me

This may seem like a minor point, however, the effect of reading the final two words alone, several seconds after the first three, is far different than taking the entire line at one gulp. The pause puts a stress on «beside me», which then causes it to serve as a bridge between «in the darkness» and «your voice». It is important to note that in the last time it is not a person, but rather that person's voice that is in the darkness and the pause in the second line helps to set this up.

Other elements such as *space*, *color* and *sound* are also at the writer's disposal on the computer. Undoubtedly all these and more will come into play as more work is created for the computer screen. Already, Guernica has published a second disk *Rice Wine* consisting of prose for the computer screen. As well, *The Alchemist*, is publishing its next issue on a disk and is looking for work created for the computer.

Although the computer is still relatively new, and art for the computer screen even newer, it would be foolish to dismiss either as a fad. To do so would be like a stubborn ancient Egyptian crying «This papyrus stuff will never catch on, real writing has to be carved in stone!» □

Read Marco Micone

Addolorata



and

Voiceless People



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Hells Clicking

(Il Duce Campa)

by Joseph Maviglia

I wonder what they thought to find,
gathering courage, packing hearts in kerchiefs,
travelling long and hungry miles.

Was it hope for a new start or fear
dogging their heels?

Locked in their memory, a god hangs upside down,
his sweet tongue purpled into foam
dangling in a cold piazza.

Talk of travel fills the air like rabid cats.
Francesca says, "Can't you sit still?" as Domenico
stuffs a deck of playing cards into his suit-coat
pocket.

"I never have!" he answers. "It's in my blood
to move!"

Magnetic teeth slash at Francesca's eyes.
The burn of rope on twisted toes returns to haunt her,
as Domenico's heels click down the back porch stairs.

Il Duce, (Sweet One) was the nickname of Benito Mussolini.

Strangers' Fugue:

An Interview with Aldo Mazza

by Antonino Mazza

Preamble or (Prelude)

There are several explanations possible for what follows. There is the obvious literary one, which might occur to those few readers who are alert to the scape of the text — they, above all, will savor a rare opportunity, this writer's attempt at a novel literary form: we've all heard of the biographies of the artists and of the artist's auto-biography, of the interviews with the artists and of the artist's auto-interview, but an artist interviewing his artist-sibling, now that's a choice, first ever...

And then, there is the anthropological explanation, which, as we know, will appeal to another select group of readers — no matter their ethno-cultural background, to be sure — since it has to do with roots and identity, and, I might add, not a little pride! This patchwork of readers, as I was saying, will suppose that it was love, of one's own, that induced me to interview my brother — the fact that Aldo Mazza also happens to be a musician/composer/performer and member of Repercussion, the Montreal-based percussion group, whose four members are often cited, internationally, as «examples of the new virtuoso of the 20th — century: the percussionist,» becomes secondary to them.

But it is this group of readers, in particular, that I must disappoint the most — though, indeed, I love my brother, with whom I share much personal history: born in Calabria, therefore outside history; post-war child of immigrant parents; first generation of a fathomless line of marginal humanity to receive formal education; of unclassified mother tongue; teen years in Canada, therefore teenage cultural-orphan; etc. etc... And while I'm aware that this labour smacks of Nepotism — the national 8th, deadly sin, certainly — what can this (weigh) on one whose distant, and even more recent, Mediterranean ancestors professed paganism?

This interview, with my brother, who is in his early thirties, therefore, has a more fundamental explanation, of interest, perhaps, to readers of post-modern culture. Its purpose is merely to draw attention to certain marked changes in the aesthetics that distinguish the younger Canadian artistic expression, radically, from prevailing earlier modernist trends.

I asked my brother for an interview when he was last in Toronto, this past December, but its origins, for me, stem from certain reflections on aesthetics over some time, which have found a focus, recently again, as chance would have it, in my chance reading of the poem, «Dear Biographer», by Earle Birney, in the collection *Fall By Fury M & S*, 1978, sent to me and bearing the inscription: «For Antonino Mazza, met happily in Kingston, November, 1984», by its octogenarian and esteemed author.

This poem, in the form of a note, to the would be biographer, begins by listing an alien heap of documents that have gathered, and make up the writer's «university MS collection»:

*«everything insoluble in air
the world blew up around me»*

This is a great frozen «snow-bank-job», the biographer is informed, since there is in it nothing that is retraceable back to the poet's closest, and long lost human relations:

*«but the best friends
there was seldom need to write
and relatives had nothing to say»*

And while our first impulse may be to feel the evaporated traces, in the following verses:

*«whatever was edible
dissolved long ago on the ghostly tongues
of perplexed parents
and frustrated teachers»*

a regrettable loss, both to the author and to posterity, the last stanza radically dissuades the reader from such sentiments. Instead, in these last, precise lines:

*«only my true love knows
what morsels are left
and she will not use them
to feed your image»*

the reader discovers that his participation, in the poem's catharsis, is wholly dependent upon his complete willingness to align himself on the side of the «I» of the poem, that has now secured for itself an

emotional territory, a felicitous separateness, from the intended addressee: the biographer.

But this is a separateness, and therefore a victory over, and against whom, we may well ask? Who is the «biographer» a metaphor for: an invader of privacy, a stranger in the realm, the bogeyman «other» who invariably, the poem seems to imply, will take great pleasure in none other than in prowling through our lives, to thrust some image of his own making upon one, confounding, robbing one of one's intimate self — and, therefore, must, at any cost, be halted in its tracks?

Does the contemporary sensibility feel at ease with this resolve toward the «other» in our realm, thereby accepting also the poem's more subtle implications, or is the new sensibility more likely to question the implied instigations found in it, since, in order to participate fully in this glee, in this victory, the reader must also impart a mask of anonymity and estrangement to this «other» whoever he may be? What if the stranger happens to be, in earnest, intent on learning how it was to be living, in this part of the world, in the 20th century, what better subject then, than to focus on Earle Birney; certainly here he should find a human being who has witnessed modern times lucidly, sensitively, meaningfully; and how should one turn an anonymous, deaf cheek to this late arrival, and say: «Keep your hands off my toys!», or, closer to our purpose, «Keep my music off your drum sticks!». Why am I, the contemporary reader — and isn't every late arrival, and therefore, every reader, in some way, a biographer — overcome by a draft that chills my skin on reading this last stanza, of Earle Birney's successful poem, which, peculiarly enough, sheds a new light on those «evaporated traces» — is the vanishment of his human relations a blessing in disguise for the poet, since it coincides and/or, ultimately, conspires to fulfil the poet's singular aspiration: to barricade the «other» and himself from each other?

At this point the ethno-cultural viewpoint may want to see Earle Birney's poem as fertile grounds for a condemnation of the ideology of the dominant Canadian culture; just imagine: the best examples are in the best of them that represent the ideology of their ethno-culture the most; etc... etc...

But there may be no such grounds on which to impinge, on Earle Birney, the colour of inimical personage, after all; And, to what advantage would anyone wish to turn this, or another poet into scape-goat?

So, perhaps, looking into this poem a little more thoroughly may prove the less willful, the healthier attitude.

As we know, to use an example, Earle Birney's literary works are in a tradition of modern Canadian writing which has been critical, among other things, of the ecological devastation which has gone on, often unabated, on this side of the planet — the result of the self-indulgent, stultified and stultifying, consumer-greedy activity of modern man. Such opposition speaks highly of the courage of this generation of artists, and of their commendable works. Nevertheless, can the attributes which characterize modern man, in their art, also define man in general, and contemporary man, in particular?

It is in this light, I believe, that we may search to explain to ourselves this poem's seemingly gratuitous, headlong precipitation towards its inimical, distance generating resolve:

*«and she will not use them
to feed your image»*

However, even after reading the next-to-the-last compelling stanza, in which the poet expresses his awareness of the impossibility of knowing who he has been — himself being subject to the effects of relentless time:

*«a few books
but they are all lies lacking nutrition
written by others
I once was»*

and, thereby, to an even less degree knowable to the «other», I still have great problems accepting the logic by which the poet elects to welcome his biographer, the new comer to the shores of his verse — with stoney silence.

By reverting to some learned, logical extensions of our own, we may suppose that the poet's defensive, suppressive measure was adopted to ward off classical modernist thirst for sensationalism. But, and herein lies the pivotal point, can we, biographers, readers, the generation of new arrivals on the shores of our contemporary, pluri-ethnic, pluri-cultural, pluri-linguistic, post-industrial, post-modern society accept this distance as belonging to the onto-logical order of things, or does this defensive, suppressive attitude, adopted by an earlier sensibility, in the final analysis, smack of distance generating, flagrant lack of generosity: meanness?

I believe, the contemporary sensibility, too, is aware that there is an order of things, of an ontological nature, that may remain unknowable to us. But the new sensibility in the artistic, multi-racial, post-industrial Metropolis of the 80's is enticed by another order of things, the pluri-cultural wealth and heritage of our society, indeed, of our planet, which an earlier sensibility may have been advised, even coaxed, perhaps, into ignoring, keeping us separate — the strangers for it.

The fugue

V.V.: «The most surprising thing about Repercussion is the broad cultural base of its repertoire. Listening to your concerts is like going on a voyage, spellbound, from classical to modern, from electronic to African. How did all this come about?»

A.M.: «To answer that, we ought to go back a little and point out the fact that percussion is a very ancient medium in music. I think we may well say that man's very first instrument was the drum stick, or, his foot, perhaps. Percussion, however, did not play a major role in western tradition for the longest time. This was not so in other cultures: African, Indonesian, Chinese musical traditions continued to emphasize percussion. In the West, much was done in the development of harmonics, to the neglect of rhythms. This may be exemplified by the fact that the xylophone, an instrument which has been with us, in one form or another, for thousands of years, was never used in a concert setting in the West until 1874, which is not that long ago.

As students of percussion we had to deal with this overwhelming lack of repertoire. Unlike the violinist, the pianist, the flutist, we could only draw, in the classical tradition, on compositions of the recent past. Only in the 20th Century really, composers such as Verese, Stravinski, and Bartok began to put more emphasis on percussion. Verese was one of the first to write whole works exclusively for percussion, his best known piece, *Ionazation*, is written for thirteen percussionists. Since his time, there has been a lot of experimentation and development in mallet instruments.

Overall, however, 20th-century classical tradition designates percussion as striking instruments, for sound effects, and the like. So, in our research the temptation to move back in time, from the compositions of the 20th-century, and to the music of other cultures, remains great. It's crazy, but if Bach had had a xylophone wouldn't he have composed for it?»

V.V.: «You had spoken to me earlier of Bartok as one of the earliest western composers to emphasize percussion, and that his preferences might have been related to his particular anthropological interests. Could you tell me something about his sources, and of your interpretation of his music?»

A.M.: «What Bartok did was very unique among composers. He would go through the villages of his native Hungary and collect folk melodies, which he then used as the basis for his compositions. This being the case, his compositions are very rhythmical. And, although he wrote mainly for strings, with the exception of his *Sonata For Two Percussionists* — a very difficult work in the traditional contemporary repertoire — our transposition of his *String Quarter #1*, adapted exceptionally well to percussion. One would suppose that it was originally written for percussion.»

V.V.: «Did you add any instruments to that piece?»

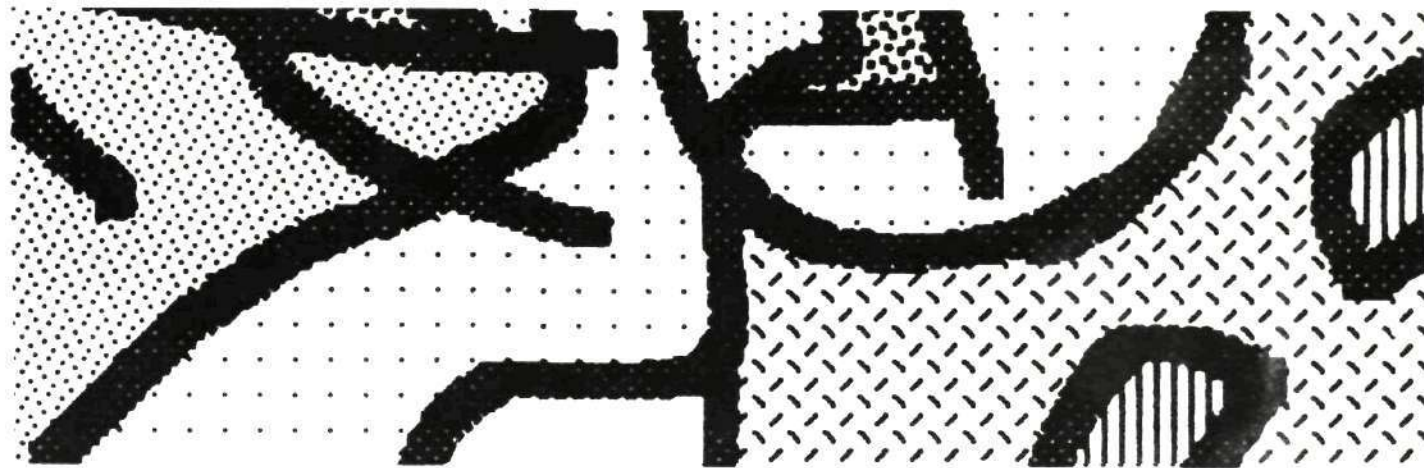
A.M.: «No, we didn't add, we simply replaced the two violins, the viola and the cello, with two xylophones, and two marimbas; each corresponding to the particular register of the original strings.»

A.M.: «I've heard you play Bach's *Fugue in G Minor*, Rossini's *Sonata #5 in E Flat*, and various other classical pieces, but your repertoire also includes both music and instruments from diverse indigenous sources, ie: Brazilian, and Asiatic come to mind. Could you tell me some of the history of these musical traditions, and how you reconcile these disparate interests as an ensemble?»

V.V.: «Both the Brazilian and the Asiatic are very ancient musical traditions. Brazilian, the Islands: Caribbean and Cuban music, go back to African roots. In recent history, in the past few centuries, however, this music migrated with its peoples to the Americas. In some instances, in places like Haiti, and in the interior of Brazil, even today, we still find music which is suffi-

as performers; for example, one can't play a Baroque work the way a Romantic piece is played, they are two totally different concepts of making music; this, however, has nothing to do with the choice of instrumentation used to interpret the works.

So, what we're doing is crossing instrumentation barriers, destereotyping the instruments. We do not label music, for example: «for strings only», its all music. And it hasn't stopped there; lately we've been experimenting with computers, in some pieces we've gone from completely acoustic to completely digital — with computer drums, tapes, synthesizers, sequences, which we play in our fusion pieces — and they've been a lot of fun to do. All this mixing of sounds, the native and the traditional western percussion and digital, makes for a very exciting musical program, which fulfills our primary objective: to give evidence that percussion is a fully integrated and fundamentally varied medium.»



ciently identical to that found in certain African villages where it originated. These cases, however, are not widespread. More widespread and interesting is the evolution that this music has undergone in the American continent, both in terms of rhythms and instrumentation. In Argentina, for example, rhythms that had travelled from Brazil combined with classical European traditions, giving rise to the Tango. The Samba and Bossa Nova are two forms that evolved from these same African sources. In Cuba, you have the outgrowth of the Samba, in Trinidad the tradition developed a new instrument: The Steel Drum. All these new musical forms are highly rhythmical. We may draw parallels in the Asiatic tradition. Here also, native music lays great emphasis on percussion. We can think of the multi-percussive Siamese and Javanese Gamelan orchestras, the Indian tablas, perhaps the most complex percussive musical system in existence.

As an ensemble, our interest pushes us to learn about the timbers and rhythms peculiar to these native traditions, and it might again relate to the fact that as students we felt somewhat culturally deprived. I mean, we're having fun now, for us it's been like stepping out of the strait jacket western tradition had wrapped our instruments in. Our instruments have finally a chance to speak these other languages, and since our fundamental preoccupation, as an ensemble, is to foreground the percussive spectrum, we don't have any pro-

blem featuring jazz, classical music, or native, on the concert stage. What must be kept in mind is the intrinsic demands each form makes on us

V.V.: «You've been to Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico... Could you speak a little bit of your tour there; and the audiences, how would you compare their attitudes with those of North Americans?»

A.M.: «Perhaps the most interesting thing about those audiences is how, if you're playing a piece of serious music, they'll sit intently listening — you can almost hear them listening — and the next moment you're doing a Salsa and they'll get up, in the middle of the concert hall, and start to dance. And it is uplifting to hear their hush of excitement; I mean, here are these four guys, coming from Canada, from Quebec, which for them is the North Pole, playing their music. Well, they appreciated the diversity of our repertoire; but then, that's no surprise. Latin attitudes are less linear, less specialized than North American attitudes, they admit more diversification, even at that level. In North America, the football fanatic doesn't care much for opera; but there, it was obvious that a greater variety of people came to see the show than we usually find in audiences here. To those people entertainment is obviously another expression of culture, so they seem to participate more readily.»

V.V.: How did you feel doing your first concert for them?»

A.M.: «Yes, at first — not

knowing how we were going to go over — I mean, we're going down there to play their music, their instruments — they've got all kinds of marimba players in that part of South America — and with our approach, which is very visual: choreography, scripts, smoke machines, etc., we didn't know if we were a bit apprehensive, it was a bit like walking on eggs. And we went there, as well, prepared to do the whole show in Spanish — we learned Spanish and this surprised them a great deal. Imagine them, hearing us speak their language, interpreting their music, alongside the music of Canada! It was a great feeling, too, to introduce them to our interpretations of Canadian folk melodies, our *Quebec Suite*, which always brought the house down!»

V.V.: «All the members of the group, Robert Lépine, Chantal Simard, and Luc Langlois, and yourself as well, though you were born in Calabria, living in Montreal, via Ottawa, some ten years now, you've played to full houses in

South America and Europe, and now are going to the Far East, yet the group is generally little known in Canada, and in your Province as well; how do you explain this?»

A.M.: «You are forgetting one thing, we were also, all of us, schooled in Conservatories and Universities in Quebec. Its a very interesting question, both easy and hard to answer. The easy answer: we haven't been live, direct from Carnegie Hall, yet!

But I can answer also with an anecdote. A couple of months ago we were doing a show in Chicoutimi, we were being recorded by the CBC. After the concert, I looked at the program, and what do I see — right there? — on the program they had printed the bio's of the group, and under each of the names they had printed their hometowns, but under my name it said simply: «L'étranger». Well, we all laughed our heads off! I guess they saw I was born in Calabria and must have figured I was a stranger, or something. □

Coda (The Loop)

*and I've seen
everything*

*help, though sometimes this music
plays hide and seek, and our planet
always delights to feel
our bare*

*feet, and loneliness, that place
in the heart running
out of breath, everything*

*helps, but only friendship cares, now
that I'm young and stripped at
last down*

to the man, I know

*that a bridge is a somersault
across the ice, that a ladder is a flight
of flesh in the air that I breathe*

*that you love to save my life, the way
only friendship cares, that you climb
with me*

*to the edge of the earth, like one
butterfly. Clinging to a cliff**

*Goodnight Aldo... Goodnight Mr.
Birney... whoever we are on this limb
of the planet!...*

* The poem is entitled *Amicizia*, the Italian word for friendship, and I would like to dedicate it to Francine.

Ethnicity as Post-Modernism

by **Fulvio Caccia** (Translated from French by David Homel)

Change international 2
Fondation transculturelle internationale, Paris
Immigrant Autobiography
William Boelhower, Essedue Edizioni, Venice
L'oiseau-chat
Hervé Fischer, Editions La Presse, Montreal
L'amour du Yiddish
Régine Robin, Editions du Sorbier, Paris
In Their Own Words, v. II, no. 1
European Journal of American Ethnic Studies, Cafoscarna, Venice

Anthropology has always sought to uncover the specific characteristics of ethnic groups, seeking universals to explain the complexity of modern society. In this way, ethnicity has served as a primary model for understanding current behavioural patterns. It is interpreted and scrutinized, like those stars at the very confines of space whose light, the source of which has long since flickered out, reveals something of our own world. This seems to be the function — a *proto-historical referent* — of ethnicity, whose Greek root *ethnos* means “people.”

This function grew with the displacement of millions of people of various ethnic origins during this century and their subsequent cultural interchange. Within the social sciences, the field of ethnic studies has sprung up, and recently, ethnohistory has been developed. Often led by the sons and daughters of immigrants eager to know more of the mechanics of immigration, these new areas of study have grown in popularity over the last 20 years. The current crisis in our civilization along with the breakdown of the American melting pot have their role to play in this process. Yet ethnicity is still studied as a transitory and *ahistorical* phenomenon, as something fated to be absorbed into the dominant culture. Only when an ethnic group lose its primary characteristics and is assimilated can it accede to history. A high price to pay indeed.

Given a choice between the proto-historical and ahistorical tendencies to which ethnicity is relegated by the social sciences, we may well choose another path and consider ethnicity as *post-modernity*. This possibility has been discussed by several recent works that have come out in the

wake of the renewed interest over the last years, and that have been able to come to terms with these two antithetical terms.

Ethnicity has always been rightfully regarded with suspicion. It has been considered the breeding-ground of folklorism, conservative thought, racism, isolationism — everything that impedes the development and evolution of a supposedly modern society. Ethnicity is an evil to be rooted out. We have only to think of Trudeau's ceaseless and knee-jerk denunciation of what he called "Quebec ethnocentrism." And the Quebec intelligensia was just as wary of it, considering its own ethnicity as a primitive stage in its national development.

Ethnicity, then, is to be avoided. A bad memory for some, a breeding-ground of racism for others, most want

this is not the only way. If culture is the whole of an ethnic group's specific characteristics, then tradition, religion and language are its main parts. These three elements define the collective identity that will later serve as a vehicle for nationalist desires and demands. This perspective, an inheritance from the nineteenth century, holds that nationalism is the political ideology of an ethnic group seeking to establish the infrastructure of the nation-state on its territory.

This movement, as we know, may involve one or several ethnic groups and often takes place through consensus or the domination of one group over another. In this case, the ethnic groups subject to domination atrophy into regionalisms and become minority cultures reactivated by flare-ups of

by territory. Depolarized and deterritorialized, the ethnic is ready to either disappear into another, larger group or discover within the latter the basis of his survival and growth by developing his cultural specificity. This is the challenge to any minority culture. We will return to this question later in this paper.

The deterritorialized ethnic group

The usual destiny of migrating ethnic groups is to be absorbed by other cultures. If we image territory as a kind of magnetic pole, a deterritorialized ethnic group will be attracted to it, even if another people already occupy it. This occurs through a kind of gravitational overthrow. Let

most recent citizens. Language imposes its own collective memory on the immigrants' children who are torn between the repudiation of ancestral models and supporting the values of the lost country.

The multiethnic paradigm

I have come to believe that the immigrant self is a double construct; this is true of all minority cultures. Which is why the immigrant must tell his story and engage in a ceaseless balancing act between the utopian rhetoric of the New World and its reality. This endless voyage between the idealized future and the present forces him to master two cultural systems within a single model. The dual, fragmented identity that results is analogous to the *persona* created by mass media and mass cultures.

"The multiethnic paradigm," as Boelhower calls it, consists in "the inversion or fictionalization of the pretensions of representationality of the dominant culture." By producing a wave of images and setting them free in society, ethnicity destabilizes monocultural discourse that would lay claim to being the sole possessor of reality. This would be the position "of multiethnic theory in the post-modern situation, wherein the icon becomes facsimile, presence is haunted by absence, representation and production," as Boelhower says. Our mass culture delivers the same results, following the crisis of the great national cultures at the beginning of the last decade. Protest movements and the counterculture were the most eloquent symptoms of this disorder.

The idea of the transcultural

Published in Paris by the Transcultural Foundation, the journal *Change international 2*, though less specifically literary, moves in this same direction. Its prestigious international committee that includes, among others, Lyotard, Deleuze, Guattari, Paul Virilio, Syberberg from Germany and Quebec's Michèle Lalonde, has looked into issues of transculturality in its May issue.

Toni Negri begins by wondering if the immigrant is not a "new subject within whom North and South make contact and join, just as the different histories of work and

nationalism at regular intervals. However, territory remains the basis of their claims, which is why these minorities tend to display intolerance toward other groups.

The immigrant, the exile, stands at the opposite end of the spectrum from minority cultures. He or she begins by cutting ties with the native land and consents to cultural death, unlike those cultures struggling for survival. And so his condition is the mirror, the inverse reflection of minorities who see in him the dispersion they so fear. Yet communication between these two ethnic conditions can exist through the recognition of this fundamental opposition.

Though it causes the pain of parting and nostalgia, this sudden territorial displacement does have the advantage of restoring to ethnicity its original state of wandering, and stripping away the negative charge conferred upon it

me explain. In any kind of overthrow, what was at the bottom rises to the top; what was hidden is unveiled. In the native country, ethnic characteristics were shared by everyone, and thus not apparent, like the emperor's fine garb in the fable. But in the new land, these same characteristics become obvious. Language, customs and skin colour single out the newcomer, this new Other.

Exposed to daylight, ethnic traits soon wilt. Normally it will take a generation before the immigrant begins to erase his own differences by changing his name, his physical appearance, his accent. Toppled by the rage to adapt, language will be the first to fall, due to the needs of the workplace and the younger generation's school experiences. The dominant language is the tool through which the new country's values are transmitted to its



Ethnicity and territory

Ethnicity cannot truly be understood outside its bond with the ancestral land. Territory is its foundation. Ethnicity finds its reason for being through it, by it, its sense of belonging, its centre of gravity — but also its terrible inertia. The classical scheme holds that a people's culture can be safeguarded only within the borders of its territory, recognized and legitimized through the nation-state, one investing the other with its sovereignty. Though true,

production come together." While he argues the pros and cons of the emergence of this new subject — the immigrant is no more a "noble savage" than the advance guard of the working class — he considers the fate of the second-generation immigrant forced to "build an identity" on foreign ground. Jeanne Hyvrard joins in defining immigrants as "transnationals," these young people who come into a new world already programmed by the multinationals. An ironic twist of history, whereby the transnational, the last avatar of the nation-state, becomes a source of cheap labour for other nations, widening the circle of ethnic dispersion and creating a crisis of nationality.

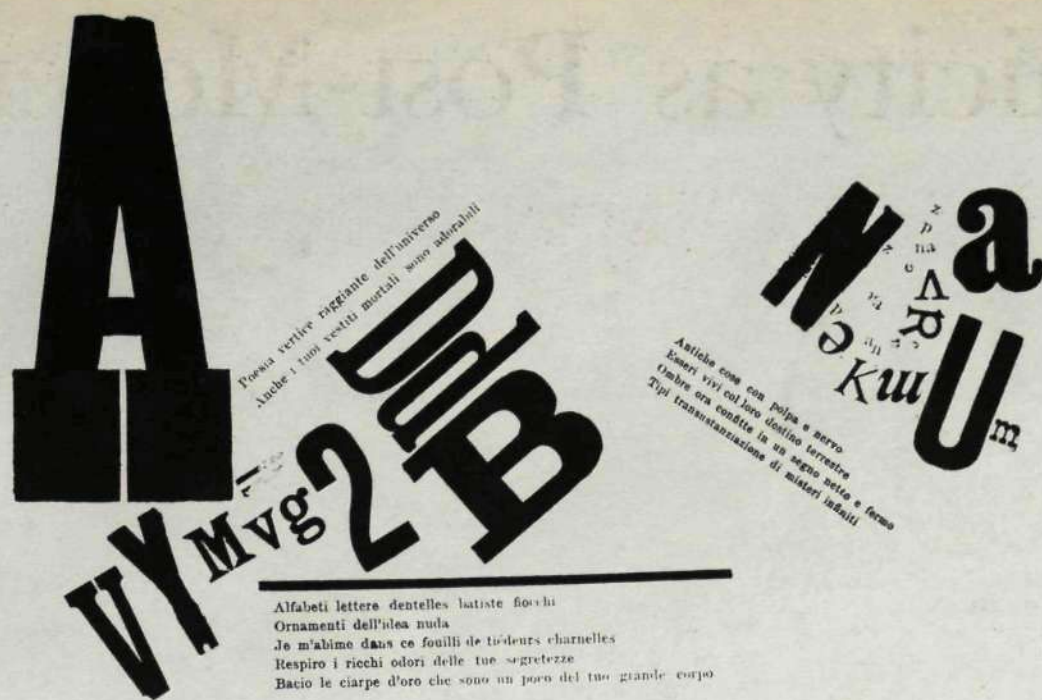
Using the term "transculture," Jean-Pierre Colin contributes an exhaustive historical study of minority cultures and their attitude toward the State. From colonization to decolonization, via the exile of oppressed peoples, the reader will discover to his surprise that another country lives within France, so famous for her chauvinism. At least one-third of her population can claim foreign roots, while four million foreigners now reside within her borders. Yet this vitality is accompanied by a return to traditional ways, as evidenced by the renewed interest in religion.

The author relates the rebirth of the regions to the restless cultural laboratory of the urban centres. From the periphery to the centre, this current includes the gay movement, a third element in this cultural triangle whose configuration seems to be leading to a new social mode — if indeed we are willing to accept the change. Late in the twentieth century, the author tells us, when the world heeds the "transnational call," it will begin to build the foundations for a durable peace.

The European intelligentsia's recent interest in this issue demonstrates just what is at stake here. Deleuze and Guattari, if I am not mistaken, were the first to recognize the issues in the course of their penetrating study on Kafka. In this transcultural perspective, Quebec occupies a special position. She combines her post-modern situation with a minority culture in search of sovereignty, as well as the rich contribution of a multiethnic urban environment.

Since Quebec has only recently emerged from its solidly traditional background, it comes as no surprise that the transformation has not been a restful one. The trouble in Saint-Léonard and the racial conflict in the taxi business are just two examples. Yet there incidents are not without their creative possibilities. Keep in mind the relations between Quebec and Canada and Quebec and her own ethnic and native minorities, each keeping up an endless stream of criticism of the other.

Though it may weaken national positions, this burst of minority energies actually constitutes the strength of the nation. Instead of founding nationhood on territorial grounds, the ethnic group bases it on its own specificity. This is the point of Morin



and Bertrand's extraordinarily well thought out argument in *La territoire imaginaire de la culture*. "The future of culture is to be found in the inner movement toward the self... the individual will discover the external world not as the pure other, the stranger, but instead as the strange... which will allow him to throw himself headlong into the invention of other worlds."

This movement toward the self usually insures the safeguarding of the main characteristics and preserving factors of an ethnic group: language and religion. For both are bearers of the memory and tradition of a people.

The relation with language

In Quebec, following the secularization that modernized society, language has supplanted religion as the cornerstone of identity. This idea is not only dear to intel-

lectuals, but concerns the population at large, which is the conclusion of *L'oiseau-chat*, an investigative novel by Hervé Fischer.

Evaluating the some 7,000 answers to the questionnaire that is the basis of the book, the psychiatrist Julien Bigras has pointed to how the relation to language fascinates and even obsesses the *Québécois*. Using a test group, the author has shown that not only has the relation to language changed considerably over the last decade, language is indeed the source of the *Québécois*' past humiliations. A few pages further on, his colleague François Péraldi reaches the same conclusion. In his rigorous analysis, Péraldi points to the respondents' great difficulty manipulating the language "that allows them to speak their fundamental aggressiveness in only one way, and that is to attack the medium" — lan-

guage itself.

In his opinion, one of the manifestations of the death wish is the impossibility of mastering one's own language, and he points to the *Québécois*' wounded narcissism that makes them turn to an idealized Other for solutions to situations that they can just as well find within themselves. He also explains the limitations of the enquiry itself, including the absence of transference that makes any worthwhile psychoanalytical interpretation impossible. Methodology is the weak point of this gigantic "self-portrait," in which the author gladly embraces the proliferation of the world's verbiage to arid scientific language.

If language is the current carrier of Quebec identity, religion has always constituted the specificity of the Jews, a group long deterritorialized. They have always denied the

thorny question of language during their long exodus through a variety of cultures. But finally, Régine Robin has written a fascinating study on the subject, aptly entitled *L'amour du Yiddish*.

The Jew cannot take language for granted, the Jewish writer even less so. Torn between Yiddish, German and Hebrew, the writer must choose. A constraint and even an impossibility summed up by Kafka in this magnificent triple equation: "impossible not to write, impossible to write in German, impossible to write any other way." The "any other way" refers to Yiddish, the language of harried exile, yet the one by which every writer must define himself or herself. Formed from German and Hebrew, the language was long a source of shame for the enlightened intelligentsia who preferred the clarity of German. An unexpected result of this was to hasten the assimilation of the Ashkenazi Jews in Poland and Russia. With a wealth of detail, Robin relates the impassioned battle that raged between 1830 and 1930, and whose issues sound so familiar to those of us in Quebec.

Between the Jew and the *Québécois* struggling to preserve their collective identity through their religious or linguistic specificity, what is the immigrant's role, he who signed over his own identity the day he departed his country? He has no other choice but to turn this loss into the instrument for appropriating world culture by adding to his repertoire of languages and codes. This is, as Julia Kristeva puts it, "the only chance, the only acceptable positivism in this modern era." □

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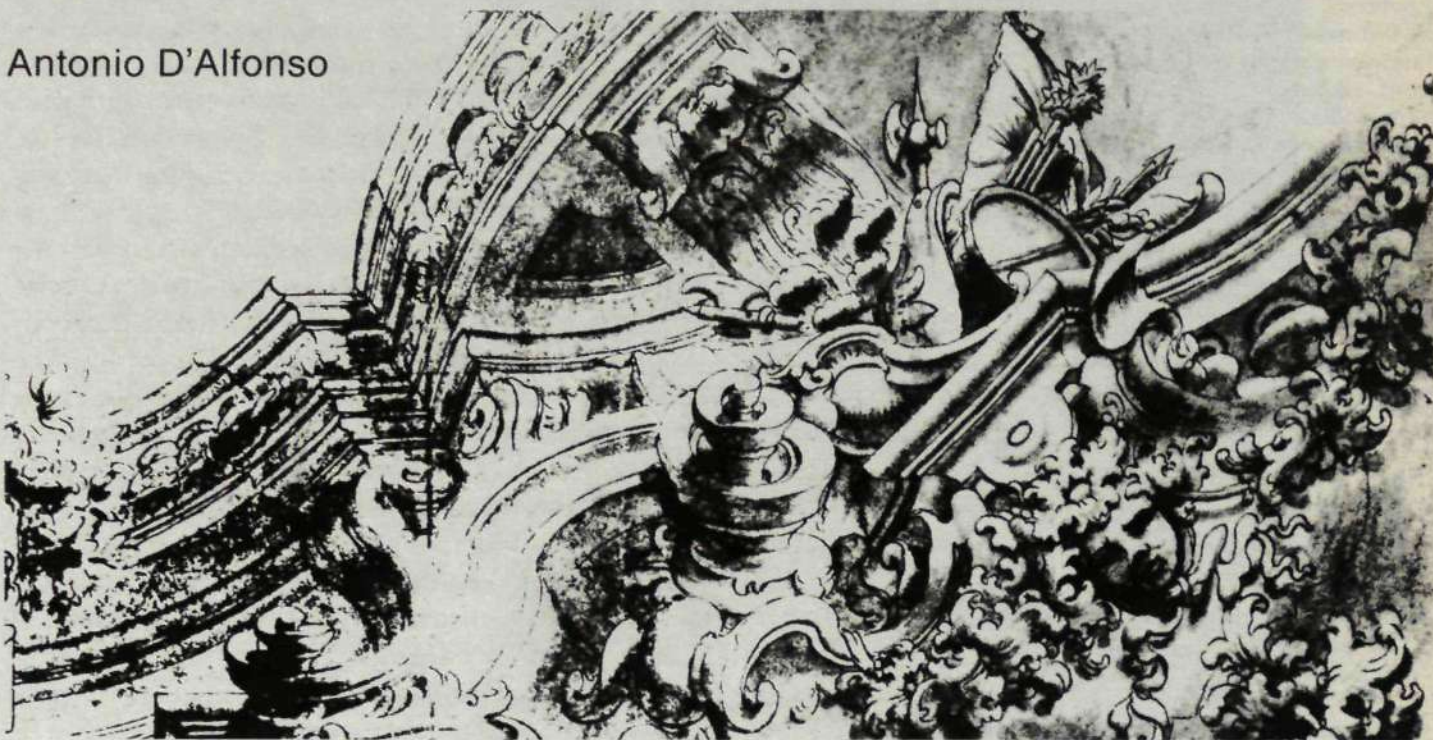


Chimismi lirici

Firenze Edizioni della "Voce,"

il nuovo BAROCCO

Antonio D'Alfonso



L'arte italiana è
fondamentalmente
l'espressione dello
spirito barocco.
Vivaldi.
Caravaggio.

Domenica, 27 maggio 1984.

Sant'Agostino. Dunque un testo per Antonella D'Agostino con cui, a Roma, ho imparato a apprezzare il barocco.

Mina sta cantando alla radio, la sua voce rauca di blues. Sto seduto pensando come devo pulire il mio corpo, sbarazzarlo del suo blues. Mio cugino Tonino dorme, non vuole alzarsi. Mi dice che si sente come se avesse portato sacchi e sacchi di fave. Non ha fatto niente da quando sono arrivato qui a Guglionesi. Il suo lavoro è divertire la famiglia, darle un po' di speranza, mostrarle un'altra via, una nuova direzione. Per il barocco la vita era importante quanto l'arte.

Mina sta cantando: *rosa sopra rosa*; ed io ascolto mia zia strusciare con l'aceto il pavimento nuovo di marmo. Marmo: il barocco; l'aceto: vita amara? riso amaro?

A contatto con la pelle la freschezza della camicia a righe rosse. Ho deciso di non mettere la camicia oggi. Ho messo i pantaloni di cotone comprati a Firenze, le scarpe comprate a Termoli — il mare, il mare —, e un paio di calze bianche di puro cotone. Mi sento veramente italiano qui, però ne sono timido. Mi hanno forzato ad avere vergogna di sentirmi italiano. Non è permesso essere quello che uno è in Canada. Devo abituarli a essere quello che sono, malgrado tutte le critiche che possono farmi.

Ieri gli Azzurri hanno vinto 2 a 0 contro Team Canada. Gli Italiani del Canada per quale squadra parteggiavano? Dov'è il patriottismo canadese? Mito americano: l'Eldorado. (O Ladorada?)

Sto leggendo Francesco Jovine. *Le terre del Sacramento*. Leggere Jovine è un grande *high* quando uno scrittore molisano lo legge nel Molise. Guardialfiera — paese del Jovine — a due passi da Guglionesi. La frana di Guardialfiera si vede bene dalla mia finestra.

Jovine capiva la sua gente, le loro speranze, le loro paure. La sua opera, fondata su scene a dialoghi tipicamente cinematografici, si presenta come un mosaico. Il barocco italiano al suo meglio.

L'arte italiana è fondamentalmente l'espressione dello spirito barocco. Vivaldi. Caravaggio. L'opera italiana dei *castrati*. Forse l'espressione incosciente dell'arte italiana moderna del Québec e del Canada? Come definire l'arte barocca? (Rileggere McLuhan e la storia del barocco).

Il barocco: perla di forma irregolare (dal Portoghese); manifestazione artistica del Seicento. Mai lo stesso, né della stessa intensità in ogni paese. (Nel Seicento c'erano anche Rembrandt e Vermeer.) Però un ambiente. Uno stile bizzarro di vivere, di pensare, di creare. Il barocco: esuberanze, declamazione dell'ordine stabilito, della bellezza armoniosa, movimenti senza fine. «Il barocco cercava di unificare sfaccettature e esperienze disparate dirigendo l'attenzione verso il punto di mutamento» (McLuhan, *Vanishing Point*).

Prendere il «momento di mutamento»: il barocco: la fotografia del Seicento. Penso a Gianlorenzo Bernini, alla sua statua esquestre di Luigi XIV (1670), ai suoi colonnati del Vaticano (1656). Penso a Francesco Borromini, ai suoi soffitti in mosaico — che guardano Dio — di S. Carlo alle Quattro Fontane. Penso. Ripenso. Rivedo.

L'arte come cattura del momento fugace. «I musicisti» di Caravaggio. Il teatro della fotografia. Tutto ciò che non serve nella vita quotidiana. Come fare per vedere l'essenzialità nell'assurdo? Il barocco forse è il *contrappunto* (Bach, sempre Bach) dell'essenzialità di cui io parlavo nel 1977 per descrivere l'arte come prodotto del ritorno a una natura di «secondo grado» (cioè la natura rivista — *retrovée* — dopo una visita alla cultura modernistica e urbanistica). Il barocco contro l'essenzialità? No.

Il barocco è il riso dell'artista che ritrova la natura innocente. L'artista sa ciò che una cosa è, ciò che è assolutamente necessario per costituire una cosa, senza di cui la cosa non è più quella ma un'altra cosa. Il riso come soluzione possibile in un mondo troppo serio, troppo ubriaco di teorie che non servono a niente, se non a perdersi ancora di più nell'assurdità della serietà. Il barocco, cioè il *Nuovo Barocco*, non va contro l'essenzialità ma è un altro modo di capire, di catturare l'essenza



sempre più fugace.

5 settembre 1984

Montréal. S. Vittorino, Pensando a Zio Vittorio con cui dormivo bambino nel «letto dei porci».

Ascolto Franco Battiato: *On a Solitary Beach*. Ho deciso di andare avanti. Con la mia vita. Niente può arrestarmi. Non mi fermerò più. D'ora innanzi, chiunque voglia mi seguirà. Gli altri possono rimanere indietro. O davanti. (Andare avanti non è un'esperienza che si misura in metri.) Basta con questa voglia di morire. Devo prendermi in mano. Con la passeggiata. Sempre la passeggiata. Come un altro universo che si apre davanti a me. Universo della parola, del pensiero. La passeggiata con un poeta del Canada che parla della natura di secondo grado. Dell'essenzialità (Rileggere l'articolo scritto sulla sua poesia non per narcisismo ma per sapere se sono cambiato.)

Il termine «barocco» ha finalmente perso la sua connotazione negativa. «E' ridivenuto una formula, storicamente individuata, per indicare un tipo di espressività lirica fondata sull'ingenuità, sull'arguzia, sulla concettosità, volta a tradursi in forme stilistiche particolarmente raffinate e lussuose, ed a privilegiare, tra queste, in sommo grado, la figura retorica della metafora» (G.D. Bonino, *Il tesoro della poesia italiana*.)

Il barocco: periodo tra il 1580 e il 1759. Il Nuovo Barocco: periodo tra il 1975 e il — ? Tanti artisti da scoprire. Da leggere. Da rileggere. La vita non può terminare qui. La vita ricomincia. Mi ritrovo a un altro punto. In un altro mondo. Più dentro me stesso. Più fuori me stesso. Più dentro alla mia realtà. La realtà di chi ride. Penso a Pier Giorgio Di Cicco. Penso a Marco Micone. Penso a Maria Melfi e a Maria Di Michele. Penso a Marco Fraticelli. Penso a Fulvio Caccia. Penso a come sarà bello leggerli in italiano. Non perché non possono scrivere in inglese o in francese ma perché la loro realtà si capisce meglio vista con gli occhi italiani.

Non scriverò più (in inglese). Questo diario dove vado avanti. Da solo, Un passo avanti. Un passo verso l'ultima direzione, l'unico cammino. Scoprire me stesso. Noi altri. Un passo indietro.

Il «momento di mutamento»: quando uno diventa un altro. L'istante preciso di una trasformazione. L'atto fissato, il verbo si metamorfosa in un sostantivo. L'atto e il verbo hanno una loro moralità che nasce dalla loro interiorità; il *freeze frame* barocco, il sostantivo artistico, al contrario, non conosce la moralità; esiste per sé e è quello che

appare davanti a me denudato di qualsiasi ottimismo e pessimismo, come se fosse provocato da una forza superiore matematica.

Qui tutto ha un senso, anche le apparenze dell'inutilità. A questo punto non si può più parlare di fioriture superflue. Tutto diventa un fuoco senza attributi, l'essere nominato. Una nomina- zione senza il bisogno di descrivere la propria storia perché il passato si vede dappertutto, sul «viso» dell'atto fissato, del sentimento catturato.

Il barocco è un lirismo forse ma meno il romanticismo del gesto o l'automatismo del modernismo dove il gesto si pone come la scusa o il prodotto dell'ultimo momento.

Nel Nuovo Barocco il gesto non conta più. Il principio e la fine escono dal momento stesso, incorporati in questo, la sua narratività intrinsecamente appiccicata alla mutazione. Si può accennare ad una metafisica tipo seicentesco inglese — dell'Herbert o del Donne — soprattutto perché esiste nelle loro opere questo desiderio pazzo di fissare un processo, includendo il suo principio e la sua fine e mostrarlo come una manifestazione dell'essere, metà vivo, metà morto, senza un prima, senza un dopo: l'essere manifestato così nudo con tutta la sua propria storia.

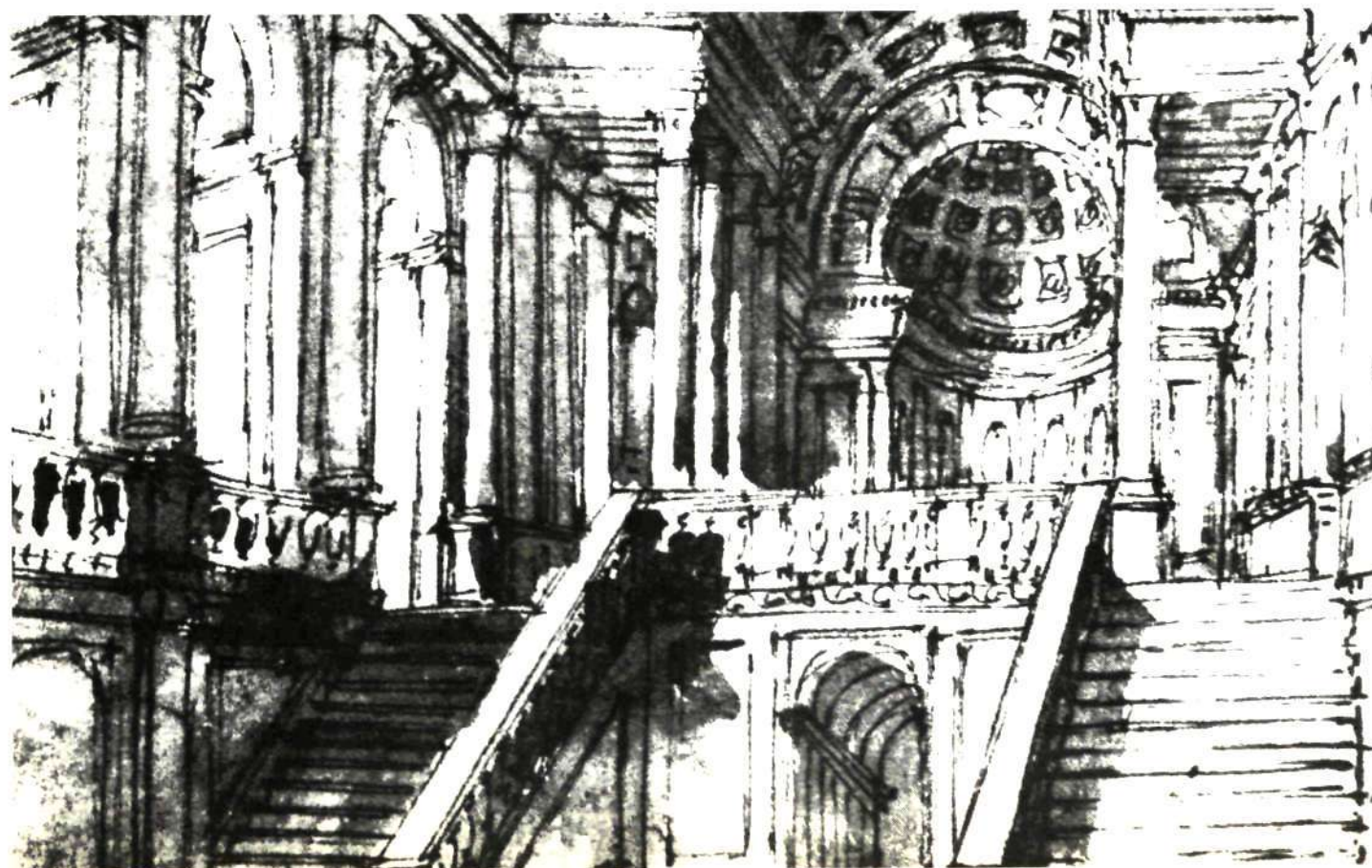
Se la modernità esprime una *drammatizzazione* del momento, cioè la ricerca di eternare il «momento drammatico» del gesto artistico, il Nuovo Barocco rifiuta il drammatico e prova a comunicare drammaticamente l'essenza in uno spettacolo vigoroso. Dopo la modernità — la natura urbanistica, l'urbanistica come natura — viene il Nuovo Barocco che non distingue più natura e urbanistica, gesto e essenza. Il Nuovo Barocco è la finzione della finzione, la sguardo sullo sguardo che guarda, una paranoia creativa caratterizzata dalla diffidenza prima della materia e poi dell'arte (la realtà e la narrazione di questa realtà in termini linguistici).

Il Nuovo Barocco prende la modernità e la tradizione come parti della stessa realtà, rifiutando dunque il metalinguaggio come possibilità unica dell'arte contemporanea.

Il Nuovo Barocco come l'arte del clown bianco. (S. Francesco di Assisi. Tutti questi santi come metafore del mondo occidentale. Un linguaggio sopra il linguaggio della realtà.)

Il riso. (Leggere la storia della commedia. Leggere Henri Bergson: *Le rire*. Rivedere i film di Totò e del giovane Fellini. Rivedere e rivedere *Francesco, giullare di Dio* di Roberto Rossellini, scritto con Federico Fellini.) □

Qui tutto ha un senso, anche le apparenze dell'inutilità. A questo punto non si può più parlare di fioriture superflue. Tutto diventa un fuoco senza attributi, l'essere nominato.



Immigrant Culture or the Identity of the Voiceless People

by Marco Micone (Translated from French by Giovanna Carnevale)

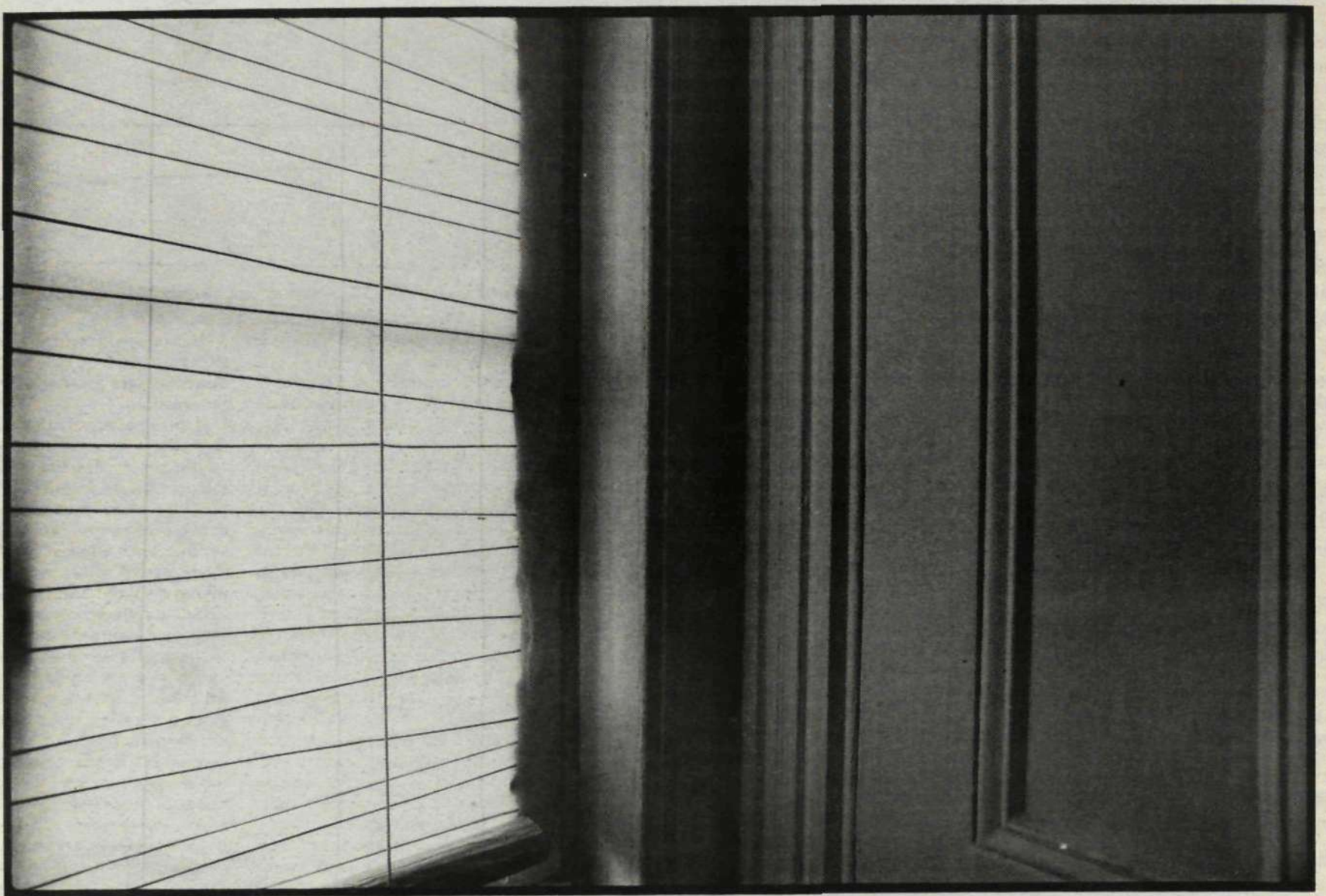


Photo: Robert Fréchette

As a child I believed that the rest of the world looked like my village. As an adolescent, an immigrant in spite of myself, I wished that Montreal could look like my village; I rebel against those who erect within the city contemptible and constricting villages where those strangers, those job usurpers, those others, those ethnics, those allophones imprint not only their differences but also their similarities.

There exists no inferior culture, just as there is no inferior individual. There exists, however, a dominant culture imposed by groups of individuals, they themselves dominant by virtue of the economic and political power they hold.

The present analysis focuses on "immigrant culture in Quebec", too long censured in

our kind of society where the dominant classes impose a uniformity of thought to the exclusion of groups who could potentially lay claim to their rights. We will treat mainly the question of upon what axes rests the concept of immigrant culture and, consequently, its overshadowing. It will also be noticeable that the Italian community will be frequently referred to, for not only is it numerically the most important, after only the francophone and anglophone communities of Quebec, but it is also the community to which I belong and which I know best.

From 1946 to 1980 Canada welcomed 4,950,000 immigrants. In Quebec there are presently 750,000 individuals belonging to ethnic minorities, 200,000 being of Italian origin. Five million Italians have had to leave their country since World War II. The social re-

forms which followed the repressive regime of Mussolini had neither the scope nor the celerity of implementation needed to satisfy the underprivileged classes. The 1951 census brought to light a rural population of six million, having no property and concentrated in the south. Following violent peasant revolts the authorities agreed to give land to only five percent of the needy. As the ruling classes preferred emigration to sharing, the drift from the land which followed was massive.

In a village which in the early fifties was crammed with 2000 people, a decade later the local grade school teacher faced a single pupil. The massive emigration became responsible for an unhopd-for pedagogical innovation — individualized instruction. Still more desolate was the spectacle afforded by the Pa-

tron Saint of the village during the religious processions. Among the few men that were left it was no longer possible to find four of the same height who could transport the Saint on his pedestal (like the Church he often leaned to the right...). The unhappy Saint moped behind a retinue of dotterign old men, distracted children, and returning "Americans" in their garrish dress, trapped in their camera equipment like flies in a spider's web.

The countless empty houses, possessed of a bleeding Sacred Heart as their only ornament, brought to mind the evacuations of the last war. In others the white widows — who for five, sometimes ten, years had been awaiting the call which would reunite them with their husbands — sublimated their need for loving with prayer, gossip, and black dresses.

These images which haunt the immigrants from Italian soil constitute the foundations upon which one should build the immigrant culture. Would these peasants and artisans have left if the ruling classes hadn't seen these massive exodus as a safety valve capable of reducing the pressures brought to bear upon them? These impoverished rural masses, oppressed by authoritarian regimes, represented by virtue of their amenable characters and their modest financial demands an ideal source of manpower for foreign capital. In the welcoming countries these characteristics had the effect of weakening the demands of the workers, giving rise to feeling of hostility and racial prejudice which only served to divide the popular masses. One can rest assured that emigration would never have occurred if it hadn't

served to consolidate the economic and political power of the ruling classes in both the sending and receiving countries.

We find ourselves here in Quebec with hundreds of thousands of immigrants which the cultural policies of the provincial and federal governments have served to relegate to the lowest echelons of society. In the footsteps of "Canadian" multiculturalism, whose main objective is to erode and lump francophone Quebec culture in the folkloric muddle "from coast to coast", the péquist policies of cultural convergence, among other functions, serve as an asset to Quebec anglophones. In both cases we scrap immigrant culture, which alone can reveal to those who are neither francophone nor anglophone their real needs and the ways in which these needs can be satisfied.

Quebec policies of cultural development put forward once again the image of a "tightly knit" society of pure wool, upon which the ethnic minorities would embroider some enlivening arabesque. It says further, "It will be unacceptable for the minorities to become the objects of specialized services alongside other programs consecrated to the established culture, the latter being a whole subsuming different ways of life. It is Quebec culture in its present state which must welcome the fertile contributions of its minorities". The intention seems most praiseworthy and most noble. Immigrants will not be marginalized by the institution of "specialized services"! And let those who might see in it a Macchiavellian strategy of assimilation rest assured, for as the same document goes on to tell us "It is not the State but Man who creates culture". This must undoubtedly include those men belonging to ethnic minorities! It is obvious that for the péquist government, despite the profession of faith it makes in the name of humanism, there exists only one culture, and it is defined and influenced by the state; although there might exist francophone Québec cultures (official culture, popular culture) there is, nonetheless, no Greek, Portuguese, Italian, or Haitian culture in Québec. There exists, on the other hand, a culture lived by the immigrants of these same origins. It is immigrant culture. It has been alive in Québec for generations, and needs only to be defined and codified. This task falls mainly to intellectual immigrants who can free themselves from the hold of the dominant culture. For the culture of capitalist societies serves no purpose other than to deny class struggle and to reduce to silence all minority cultural expression. The myths of the American "melting pot", "Canadian multiculturalism", and "we are all Québécois" constitute some of the more eloquent examples of this. Nullifying history by retorting "We are all immigrants" does not lead us deeper in the analysis of this question.

Only immigrant culture is in the position to give an account of the total reality of immigrants and their offspring without atrophying it. It rests upon three axes: The immigrants past experience in their

country of origin, the experience of emigration-immigration, and the lived experience in the welcoming country. Knowledge regarding their experiences in their country of origin will bring to light the level of scolarity, the political, religious, and work practices, and the male-female relationships of workers coming from the outside. The analysis regarding "emigration-immigration" will reveal their vulnerability, hence exploitation, as well as the benefits accrued by the ruling classes of the sending and receiving countries in the international manipulation of workers. Finally, scrutiny of the lived experience in the welcoming countries will complete the picture of the rural immigrants, who besides having to face the usual problems ensuing from their insertion into an urban and industrialized landscape, are, in Québec, subjected to the problem related to the power struggle being waged by the two founding peoples.

Thanks to these methods of analysis, we will discover the points that the various immigrant groups have in common and the necessary regrouping, based on these points, so that they may have more bargaining power in the labour market and better conditions of life in general. We will bring to light those points that they have in common with the Québec working classes, for the ultimate goal of the enhancement and appropriation of their culture by the immigrants is to escape marginalizing and isolationist attitudes, so they can help one another in their struggle.

If, in future, we want to attack the real problems, all bodies intervening on behalf of immigrants must bear in mind these three facets of immigrant culture.

The latter has been eroded by the steamroller of the dominant culture, ignored by the powers that be, and romanticized by petty politicians and grovelling notables. The problems stemming from this are many. One of the most serious concerns young allophones. We must remember that in their countries of origin the immigrants had rarely heard of Québec and knew even less about its peculiar cultural situation. They were coming to "Canada", or worse, to "America, so deep was the ignorance in which they were kept for fear they might refuse to leave. For following the example of other countries with immigration, Québec of the 1950's had to embellish its most beguiling myths in order to deroot thousands of peasants from their Mediterranean soil.

It was, nonetheless, in our Belle Province — with its semi-autocratic and repressive regime and its backward institutions — that a large number of Italians established their homes; where, in addition, the language of success was English. Moreover, the bootlicking and blindness of the Duplessis regime in the face of English rule were such that Québec English school authorities were, in total freedom, able to hatch and implement the ultimate strategy of aggravating the minority position of francophones in the Canadian scene, and increasing the number of English speakers in

Québec. They did, in fact, lure to their schools almost all the immigrants who were of school age and, consequently, the majority of young allophones. The Catholic school system, with their retrograde philosophy, refused all "strangers", including francophones, that were not of the same faith. The parents, meanwhile, continued to live and work with francophones, and when they managed to learn a local language, more often than not they learned the language of their fellow-workers.

Until the end of the sixties, many of the teachers in these schools were either immigrant laymen or men of religion coming from the maritime provinces or the United States. The young people frequenting these schools lived in blessed ignorance of Québec, its history, its culture, and its aspirations, and were proud to make up more than 90% of the student population. Extremely young, manipulated, indoctrinated, unwitting marginals, they thought that the same ratio existing in these mono-ethnic schools, where they were busy aping the English and aspiring to replace their parents' "bosses", extended to schools all over Québec. Most of them only succeeded in replacing their parents.

Twenty years later, in spite of Bill 101, more than 70% of young Québécois of Italian origin still go to English schools. All the machination have succeeded. On the one hand the anglophones have gained extensive political support among the immigrants without being threatened economically nor bothered socially by these allophones, who because of their socio-economic status conveniently live in worker's districts with a majority of francophones. On the other hand, a number of francophone Québécois couldn't ask for better than that the Italians — and immigrants in general — remain marginalized, so that they might not penetrate the strongholds that have been jealously guarded, such as the public works sector.

Furthermore, if we analyse Bill 101 and the linguistic policies of the opposition party, we realize that in both cases there is no provision checking the marginalization and cultural weakening of young allophones frequenting English schools without ever rubbing shoulders with a real Anglo-Saxon, and at the same time unable to feed upon Québec francophone culture.

The obvious solution would have been a total and progressive unilingualism or, short of that, the authorities should, at the very least, have intervened by introducing French into the mono-ethnic schools, so that these youths would at least be assured of possessing a basic knowledge of Québec culture. It would have also been desirable for certain subjects to be taught in French, as has been done for the past ten years in the West Island (a posh English neighbourhood), where well-schooled and well-to-do parents demand that their school commission provide the kind of schooling that will ensure their children's future. Moreover, the mother tongue should have been taught within the regular curriculum, making sure that the contents of such a course en-

gender neither prejudice nor chauvinism.

We must not, on the other hand, believe that frequenting a French school would have constituted a panacea for those young allophones. Contrasted with the marginalization of the English schools, for the present, French schools only offer assimilation. Thus, of the hundreds of young people belonging largely to the working class, besides being decimated by our school system (only 9% ever make it to university, as opposed to 43% of those young people with at least one parent who is a professional), they must also suffer the alienating and marginalizing effects of possessing an English education in a francophone country.

If the authorities had kept in mind the factors of immigrant culture, they would have recognized the real needs of these young allophones deprived and torn between the expectations of their families from peasant stock, and the incessant enticements of an urban existence. They might have, in conjunction with other organizations who are working towards furthering the well-being of immigrant workers and their families, found the best means of ensuring the Frenchifying, integration, and knowledge of the particular background of these youths.

No such thing was ever done. And no one uttered a peep in protest. In such an atmosphere the dominating ideology simply continues to dominate. It preaches salvation through going to English schools in North America (forgetting Québec). Some may think that anglicization has permitted these youths of Italian origin and their families to struggle up a few rungs on the social ladder. Nothing could be further from the truth. Mobility being what it is, Québécois of

Italian origin are still amongst the more socio-economically disadvantaged groups in Québec society.

If the Ministry of Education had taken into account the factors involved in immigrant culture, these mono-ethnic schools, which only serve to check integration, would never have been allowed to exist. They would also never have allowed young people to frequent English schools in a province where the majority of the population was French-speaking. We could, on the other hand, have run original pedagogical experiments at the elementary level, using as languages of instruction the mother tongue and the language of the majority population. Furthermore, in the higher grades we could have established courses directed towards their particular background, so that the pupils and students could accept their differences, thus turning them into assets instead of a source of inferiority and lethargy.

But in Québec, as elsewhere, influential people only stress the differences between ethnic groups in order to further divide them.

A treatise dealing with immigrants must bear in mind the immigrant culture if we want to capture the complexity of these people coming from foreign places, with all their differences and similarities. To dwell on their differences is to play the game of those reactionary establishments, within the ethnic minorities, who have much to gain by a consolidation of the ghettos and the retention of their power. Let us not forget that there are fewer differences between an Italian worker and a French worker than there are between a worker and an Italo-phone practician or professional. It is more than cross-breeding, it is a fundamental similarity. □

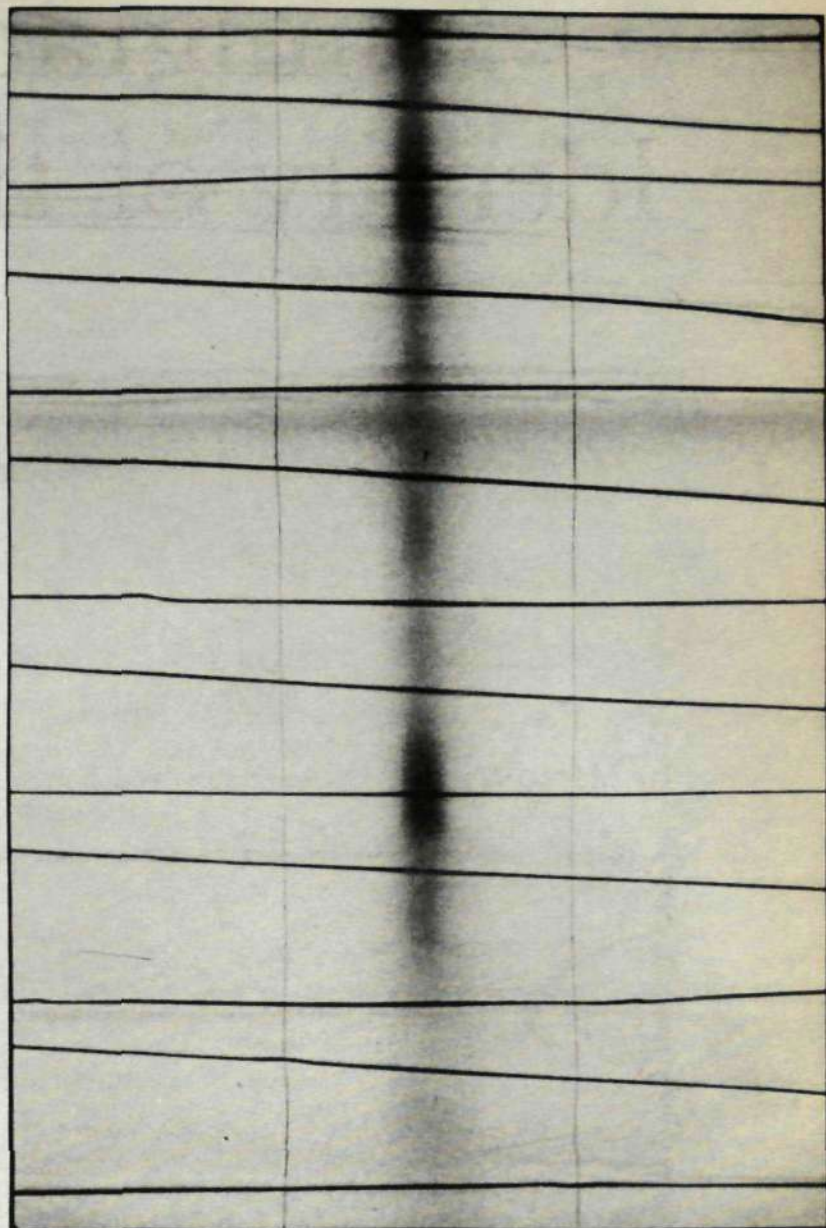


Photo: Robert Fréchette

Surprise in the Archive

by Bruno Ramirez

The National Photography Collection is something Canadians can be proud of. It is a division of the Public Archives of Canada, housed in an elegant building on Wellington Street, near the bridge that links Ottawa with Hull. For some time I had been aware of its existence, mainly because during my frequent trips to the archives' manuscript section I had made it a habit to spend my work-breaks looking at the photographic exhibitions on display inside the building. Finally, one sunny Spring day I decided to delve into this archival treasure where important chunks of Canadian history could supposedly be tracked pictorially through the thousands of photographs that make up the collection.

My goal was twofold: as a recent convert to the value of documentary photography, I simply wanted to check out this archive — see how it functioned, and assess the quality of the material. At a more concrete level, I wanted to find all the photographs I could on the Italians of Montreal of the pre-World War II period, as I was completing a book on that topic and doing research for a documentary film on the same subject.

I must confess that by the time one of the clerks has shown me the ropes, I was truly impressed: by the quantity of the material; by the way it has been classified; and by its retrieval system. It was modernity and efficiency at their best, accompanied by an extremely kind staff. What more could a researcher ask for?

That day I learned a lot about post-Confederation Canadian life. It was a sort of anarchic learning experience. As topics came randomly to my mind, I traced them through the catalogue so that I could see what these events had «looked like» to the eye of the contemporary witness: the Winnipeg strike of 1919; the building of the Cartier bridge; countless photos of Mackenzie King giving speeches and signing bills; western settlers posing near their first harvest; the conscription riots of Montreal — and so on. It didn't take me long to realise that one day of zig-zagging through this visual treasure was not enough, and so I was back a few days later.



Above: «Dagos laying new steel rails, C.P.R. (Alta)». Public Archives of Canada, PA 11731. Below: «A Russian, a Lithuanian, an Italian». Public Archives of Canada, C 9799.

The second day

My second day of research was as disappointing and depressing as the first had been exciting. Still, I learned a few things about my adoptive country's multicultural heritage — things that confirmed some of the intuitions I had had all along. In vain I went through all the possible classifications so as to find photos of Montreal's Italians in the pre-World War II period: absolutely no sign of life! And this despite the fact that at the time Montreal was the leading centre of Italian settlement in Canada, that the community's population had reached the 25,000 mark by 1941, and that its «Little Italy» was a definite cultural and territorial entity where public events such as processions and rallies were almost weekly events.

One exception was the photographic portrait of a notorious Montreal-based Italian *padrone*. In 1904, at the height of his influence as an immigrant labour importer, he had sent an autographed portrait to the then Deputy-Minister of

Labour, Mackenzie King, probably to advance the cause of the delicate multinational business he was carrying out in Montreal. Of course, he didn't know that King was about to nail him by having a Royal Commission set up to inquire into the fraudulent practices of Montreal's importers of Italian immigrant labourers. Clearly, King had no intention of framing the photo and hanging it in his living room. Instead, he turned it over to the Royal Commission as a piece of evidence, and from there the portrait found its way into the photography archive.

I had known about this event for some time and had even written about it, but when it turned out that this photo was the only thing I could fish out, I couldn't help reflecting that it had taken a Royal Commission to put Montreal's Italians into the National Photography Collection.

After this letdown, I decided to continue my inquiry by enlarging the scope of my topics: forget about the Ita-

lians in Montreal and look for pictures of Italians anywhere in Canada. But by the time I had gone through all the possible classifications and combinations thereof, my learning experience on Canadian multiculturalism was more than I could take. All I came up with was a little more than a dozen photos, the bulk of which came from Toronto at the time of World War I: an Italian living in that city had taken a series of shots of a public celebration in honour of a group of fellow-countrymen leaving for the war. He had probably sold or donated the photos to the Archives and that's how they had found their way into the collection. If one then excludes this group of photos, all that is left on Italians in Canada of that period is about half a dozen items.

Dagos

Of course, the count may vary depending on whether one is familiar with the terms «Dagos»; for, two of the photos I have included in my count carry the caption: «Dagos laying new steel rails, C.P.R.

(Alta.)» I wondered whether the archivist who had catalogued these two photos knew that «Dago» was (and still is in some regions of North America) the derogatory term most commonly used to refer to Italian. It grew out of the stereotype that associated Italians with any kind of work involving digging. There was no question — I thought — that the Italians labourers portrayed in those two photos had done a lot of digging, though in their own country they might have been artisans, musicians, gardeners, or cart-drivers. But to find them classied as «Dagos» in the hallowed halls of the Public Archives, in 1983, was a little more than I could handle.

There was another picture which drew my attention. It showed three men belonging to three different national groups standing one next to the other: a Lithuanian, an Italian and a Russian. I knew enough immigration history to remember that at the height of the immigration movement to North America one of the favourite pastimes of policy-makers and social scientists was compiling racial and national typologies. Undoubtedly, it helped them to put some order into that *Tower of Babel* that was the universe of immigration. It was part of the effort to help employers, social workers, police officers and land lords (just to mention a few) distinguish one immigrant from the other by attributing to each national group certain «natural» characteristics.

It took just a glance for me to recognize who the Italian in that photo was — maybe because he looked like an uncle of mine, or perhaps by the way he had positioned his right arm. It must not have been so easy, however, for those researchers who had no such instincts — according to the caption the Italian was the Lithuanian, and viceversa.

By this time I was thoroughly convinced that the Italians — one of the largest ethnic groups that make up the Canadian cultural mosaic — did not have what it takes to make it into the prestigious National Photography Collection.

As I walked down the elegant marble stairway that leads to the main exit, I felt like a historian leaving an archive, empty-handed; this time, however, I had found a story worth writing about. □

The Empire Strikes Back

by Lamberto Tassinari

(Translated from French by Patricia Vergeylen)

Of course I had heard about Québec before arriving there in December of 1980. As a schoolboy I discovered it in my geography books. A long silence then settled in — a silence which was broken by General de Gaulle's famous outcry, "Vive le Québec libre". The entire world talked about it, that is about the General. In the seventies I made three trips to Quebec from Italy and settled there for personal reasons in 1980.

Four years residence may not seem enough time to discuss the grand idea of independence which has been lingering here for two centuries. My voice is shaky: my words may seem superfluous after so many books, articles and speeches.

As a reference I will use my own experience and mainly the recent articles I have read on the crisis of the idea of independence. Upon my arrival here I was struck by two things: the extreme melancholy of the young and unnering store signs such as: "Maison du Pauvre", "Le marché du chômeur", "Magasin de l'assisté social", (Markets for the poor, the unemployed, the recipient of Social Welfare) — signs which are not found even in the poorest regions of Italy.

To rationalize this victimization I vaguely remembered the title of a book: "Les nègres blancs d'Amérique". Since then I have read, observed, discussed. Thus I have learned that the Québécois have been and are still an ethnic minority, conquerors who in turn were conquered, dispossessed, ostracized, and have suffered the injustices which befall all minorities.

In the early sixties this anguish and ambiguity has been referred to as "the disease of Quebec" in the magazine *Parti Pris*.

I believe that this "disease" is the semi-conscious product of the Québécois intelligentsia rather than a baroque, inevitable consequence of history. I shall attempt to prove my hypothesis by retracing the ideological process which has upheld the dream of independence through past and recent articles on its crisis. Symptoms of the "disease" have of course always existed within the society as they resulted from the Francophones' socio-economic inferiority and colonization. I believe though that the Québécois people have been and are a "healthy" people!

In 1964 Michel Van Schendel was writing in *Parti Pris* about Quebec's own form of colonization, "It is easy to fall back on abstract generalizations which lead once more to a rootless universalism when no extensive studies have been carried out on Quebec's pattern of colonization and under-development". To my knowledge this analysis has never been developed by the intellectuals or if it has, its results have never been put into practice. A "rootless universalism" is the classic defect of every intellectual avant-garde: it is the immobilization of an ideology, separated from reality. The major difference however between the elite in Quebec and others is that its ideology has never projected the society towards a new beginning but has kept it immobilised, linked to a primordial trauma.

I will briefly trace the course of the "disease" which led to the ideology.

In the nineteenth century the daily fight for survival within this Anglo-Saxon continent had created a malaise. The anguish arose from a real, physical, concrete threat and there had never been the means and time for it to be interiorised and expressed as an existential malaise. The ideology was then being

shaped by the French colonists' nationalism. This era gave birth to the myth of the Promised Land, the North as the site for a future Franco-Canadian civilization — this moment lasted for over a century.

In the early fifties an economic boom was sweeping Western civilization. The rural lifestyle and values of the people of Quebec were being rapidly transformed. Montreal, a close neighbor of the United States, was almost becoming an American city. The elite began its campaign for independence during these years.

Its platform was a combination of conservatism and utopianism. These intellectuals were conservative by virtue of their nationalism and utopian by virtue of their association of the idea of progress with the nation's improvable values. One could already foresee that the nationalist ideology was ironically the only component destined to survive. This ideology revealed a flaw within the theoretical and economic analysis and a lack of political insight which is often found among avant-garde movements.

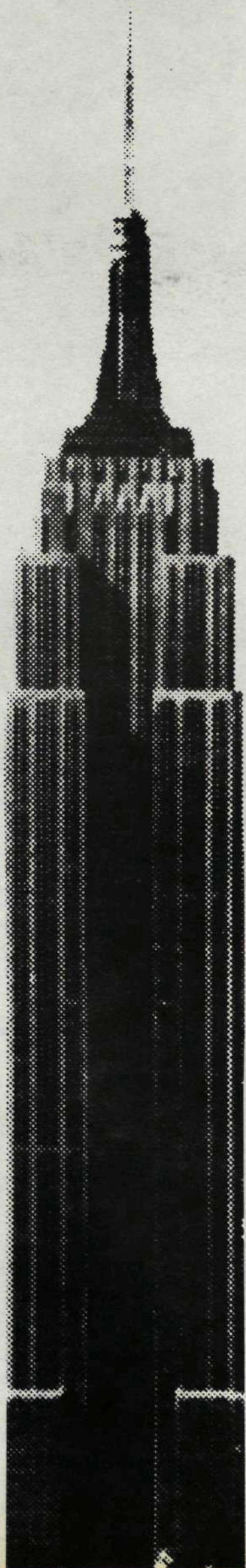
Obviously one cannot consider all the influential factors, such as the socio-economic conditions of Quebec, the history of its trade-unions, the role of the Church, the Anglo-Saxon control of finances, etc. My only concern here is the ideology adopted by these "philosophers", the strategy which enabled them to gain an ever-growing, yet fragile consensus and its role in today's political reality.

An extraordinary literary upheaval took place in the late fifties and early sixties. Artists began seeking and expressing themselves through poetry, fiction and essays. They created a political literature destined to reach the people, yet it rarely succeeded. This literature, beyond its

artistic worth, holds little political values.

Great literature is linked to politics. If Kafka's works are representative of the political nature of literature and of the relationship between an author of a "minor" literature and his community, one can easily state that no such writings evolved in Quebec. These philosophers have always felt the need to cry out their politics as they have always been unable to express the subversive strength of negation within themselves and their culture. The writers' representation of the people is false. It is time to abandon the definition of a "people" formulated elsewhere in historical situations which never took place here and never will.

These authors are hardly aware of the existing gap between their voice and the people — a gap which is first political and then cultural. Michel Van Schendel in 1964 wrote, "The national conscience of Quebec has been lingering and causing serious consequences as no effective political action can be carried out without a close rapport between thought and action and the intellectuals and the masses." This relationship which twenty years ago was deemed political should have been cultural as well. No process can be overlooked. The intellectuals, unable or unwilling to define their "people" have on one hand burdened them with their diagnosis, the disease, and on the other side have offered as an antidote, the denial of the disease — independence. Michel Van Schendel wrote about the nationalist conscience, "...it sought to obtain a true feeling of community (if not of nation) by laying its own chart of the disease upon the French Canadians and creating a concept of a "we" boy-scout which was really an "I" plural". In my opinion



this definition applies as well to the French Canadian nationalism of the Duplessis era as to the present social-democratic nationalism.

The intellectuals were aware however of the ambiguity and risks of their nationalism. Paul Chamberland in 1964 wrote, "It is true that 'nationalism', our nationalism represents a danger, a stumbling block. We have never denied it. Nationalism is one of the most eloquent characteristics of our minority, our colonization. It faithfully reflects our alienation, the petty, barren nature of our existence; its mediocrity its grandiloquences of agricultural committees, or of the 'belle province'..." The present wave of freedom seems to be carrying this traditional nationalism to its extreme "...Within objective conditions of the situation..." Nationalism can only lead to a feeling of national responsibility unless it wishes to return to its primal onanism". To uphold this new nationalism, the philosophers began assaulting and disowning this "man of Quebec" who existed only within their intellectual and idealistic culture and replacing him with a *made in laboratory Quebec identity*. Chamberland describes this new identity, "By interiorizing the powers which were causing our disintegration through cowardise or impotence, we have modified the resentment into guilt (self hate), changed the revolt and wish for freedom (life instinct) into masochistic submission and persecution delirium (death instinct)".

Marcel Fournier has recently wrote a most interesting article, "Autour de la spécificité", in *Possibles* in which he states that, even though the terminology of the idea of independence may vary, there cannot be any ongoing solution to the basic ideology.

The "disease" worsened when discussions on Quebec, its society and identity began. This ideology had created a persistent division between the elite and the masses even before becoming a party policy as no real change had taken place within the economic and social structure. Frustration grew among the people as a mystifying identity was forced upon them as a solution to their economic and social problems.

As we can see today, the history which would have confirmed this ideology never took place. The intellectuals and politicians are still repeating the same old story. Time has eroded their ideology; the people of Quebec have kept on living, without any hysteria, their "ambiguity" and "disease" as their own history, a result of their own identity.

Today, Yves Beauchemin, on behalf of the "philosophers", states in *Possibles* that the end of the project for independence was inevitable. The author makes us believe that there may have been a real problem which prevented the creation of independence, an almost ontological difficulty; he goes on with a psychological interpretation, "Is our death instinct so powerful that our only available solution is a slow assimilation by

a Canada that has always perceived us as a foreign body?" Acculturation here is still perceived unilaterally as an "assimilation" and not as a necessary contact and exchange, the tribal fear of being ingested by the Anglophone remains.

Marcel Rioux and Pierre Vadeboncoeur write about "Americanism" as if Adorno and Horkheimer had never written on consumer society and post-modern capitalism. For ages the "perverse and leveling power" (Rioux) of consumer imperialism has been shaping the entire universe and, Quebec which borders the leader of this huge homogenization, will witness the possible abolition of its culture because "sooner or later Americanism will settle into our heads and our hearts"!

Throughout the world, sociologists, philosophers and economists have attempted to give a Right or Left wing definition of this unachieved crisis of Progress. Writers like Musil have observed it with a fascinating lucidity, poets like Pasolini have attacked it with a fierce passion and Pierre Vadeboncoeur writes about the heart and soul quoting Stendhal, Mozart, Racine, in his essay on James Cain... The times we live in have been defined by the French philosopher, J.F. Lyotard, as a post-modern condition. The debates which have raged these past years on the "modern" and "post modern" concepts are barely acknowledged here. The ma-



failed towards the mid-century and gave way to "profit and loss" values in human relations. I believe that this is what Vadeboncoeur refers to in his description of the "void". The only difference however is that he cannot bear this "non-culture", his heart bleeds when he states, "Religion gave the people of Quebec and of other countries a powerful, philosophical heritage which has disappeared and has never been substituted. A strange simplification has taken place everywhere in

to ignore that this "void" has a long history and that this "worldwide American" humanity is part of this modern era. Moreover, one refuses, or simply cannot realize that the values and accomplishments of this Welfare State democracy, the collectivism of assistance, the consumer society, the social-democratic slogans, are but a variable of the "American" way.

Marcel Rioux wrote, "if one charge could be laid against the Péquiste government I would accuse it of being unable to declare, more clearly, that independence could insure the creation of a different society; independence for the sake of independence, independence to continue this North American society cannot mobilize the most dynamic strata of Quebec society... The creation of a self-ruling society, reconciled with nature, freed from heteronomy, is fundamental."

Marcel Rioux writes about this new society as if it could evolve from a government's determination and not from a collective commitment and analysis.

But what is this "other" society which Rioux writes about? What is this commitment which would mobilize the most dynamic strata of society? The answer is within the quoted text: it is a "self-ruling society" (autarkic), "finally freed from heteronomy" (orthodox Québe-

agricultural, a bastion against American materialism, built by an army of abbots and lords. This is finally the melting point between "Today's Left" and "Yesterday's Right".

I come from a country which was "other" from 1922 to 1945 so this national independence does not move me.

Now that a separation has taken place between the movement for independence and its political vehicle, the elite may resort to different means to realize its objective. But the present is not that encouraging.

Jean Jacques Simard in *Possibles* writes, "...the practical aspects of the Québécois sovereignty are not very original unless one considers the religious ardour with which it has confounded State and nature, public institutions and spokesmen for the workers, technocratic rationalism and cultural freedom. I find Simard's portrayal exact except for the reference to the workers (we have seen that they can be excluded!)

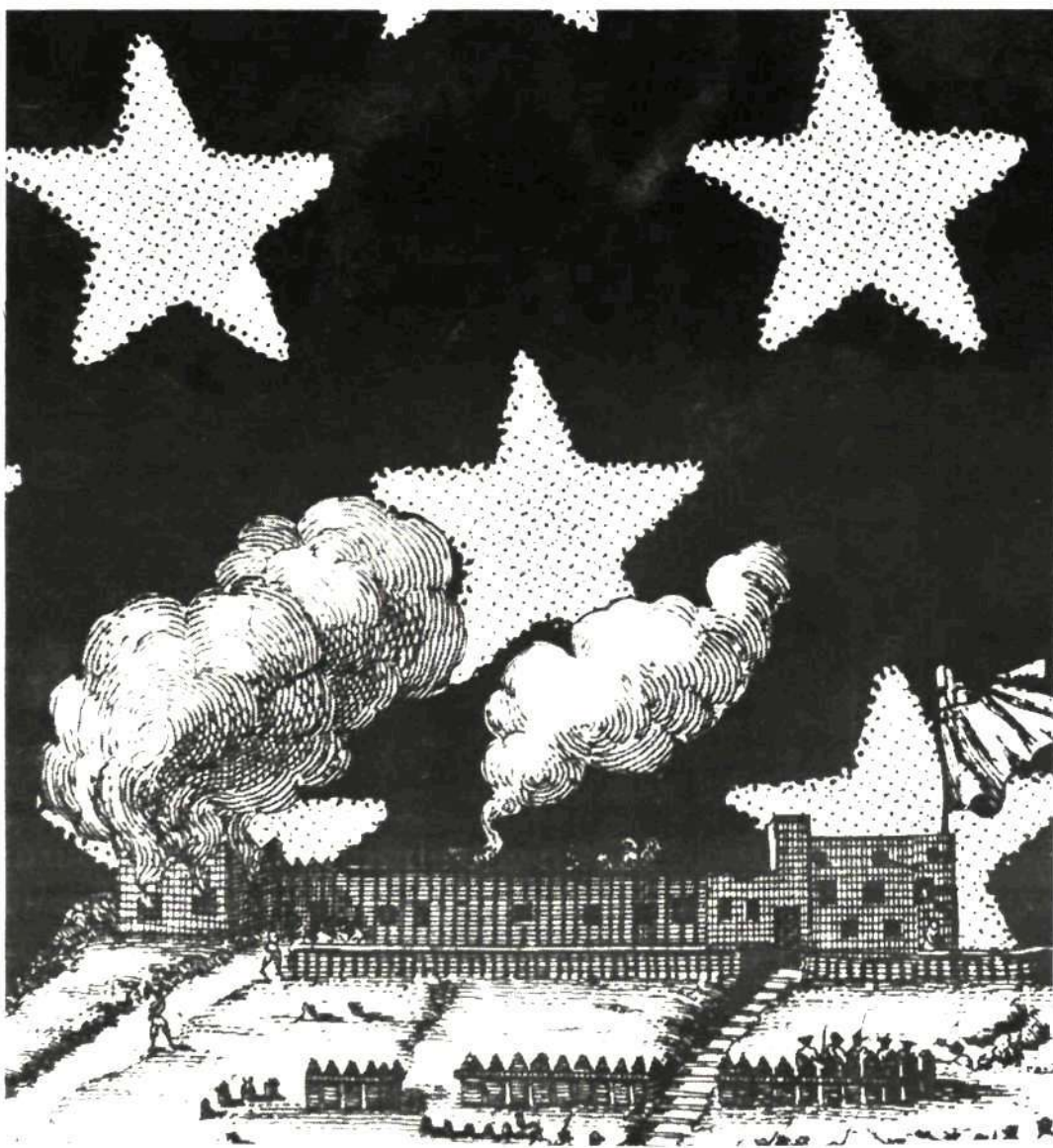
Beyond the "naivety" Simard has denounced, I would add that the intellectual politicians lack "a sense of unreality". How can one afford to have principles, values, when *Americanism* is at the door?

I will attempt to summarize the reasons for upholding such an ideology. The elite has been unable to see beyond the issue of independence as its idealism and political will is tainted by nationalist pride. With this plan, the intellectual and political class has also been seeking, more or less consciously, a place in the sun, power. There is also another reason, difficult to define, which evolves from socio-psychology and aesthetics. The nature of Canadian and Québécois society is that of a rather marginal country. The "Nothing happens here" attitude means that the minute details of daily life become important. What I mean is that living here the lack of events and upheavals give me the feeling, apparently paradoxical, that there is more "meaning" here than elsewhere. If one looks more closely however the impression vanishes. How then do politicians elaborate "realistic" approaches? The politicians however continue to challenge this unreality. The continuation of talks on independence now plunges us into this unreality.

Last February the ex-Péquiste minister, Paquette, made in *Le Devoir* the following statements, "It is not the option which must be re-examined but the means which must be adopted to make the Québécois understand that it is the only one that can lead us and insure a future."

He went on, "The electorate must understand that a carpenter with only two tools cannot work as well as one with twenty tools even if he is conscientious and devoted".

What can one say about this language, this "philosophy", this precious fable which brings us to the roots of the Québécois nationalism? □



for changes according to Lyotard occurred in the fifties. Vadeboncoeur interprets the "void" which he finds in Cain's "The Postman always Rings twice" as the crossing over to the "post modern" era.

Lyotard believes that the discussion on emancipation

the past ten years, the awareness of culture and culture itself has been eliminated among the masses." Vadeboncoeur, abashed by the loss of the soul cries out for the need to return to "nature" (European: but where is it?), far from American barbarism. In these writings one pretends

coise), "finally reconciled with nature" (conforming to its racial, linguistic, religious, economic reality...)

We have discovered the myth present in many of these texts: it is the myth which underlies two centuries of religious thinking; the French Quebec, Catholic,

Le mythe de l'ailleurs

Claude Beausoleil

(l'ailleurs, l'écartèlement, le sud hantent l'imaginaire de la littérature québécoise, les livres discutent souvent de cette fuite vers les montagnes du nord où vers les autoroutes du sud et c'est toujours le même recommencement des choses qui s'effectue, un *mythe* est au centre de ces ramifications, celui de l'effleurement épidermique des consciences, il y a une sorte de beauté dans ces fuites éperdues, ici partir c'est souvent exister, ici écrire c'est souvent s'enfuir — en nous-même, dans le territoire du langage, dans l'inventé —, la littérature québécoise s'alimente de partout (courants formels européens, beat generation américaine, philosophies orientales...), il y a je crois une sorte de *mixture* opératoire qui donne à la littérature québécoise un état particulier de frémissement, l'ailleurs est toujours là pour soulever nos peaux et nos rêves, pour inquiéter nos certitudes, pour nous permettre de survivre sans territoire, vouée à l'imaginaire voilà le destin d'une littérature mineure minant la langue et traversant les doses d'inouïs)

Claude Beausoleil

«Et la pourpre vêt la véranda rose,
Et dans l'Eden de la Louisiane,
Parmi le silence, aux encens de rose,
La créole dort en un hamac rose.»

Émile Nelligan (1899)

«Sur la plage de Malibu
où folâtrant, la nuit,
des stars en bikini.»

Paul Morin (1960)

«west hollywood holistic dream
sur le sentier des étoiles»

Bernard Pozier (1982)

«Ils chantaient avec leur sourde musique
De Shangai à Moscou
De Singapour à Coventry
De Iidice à Saint-Nazaire
De Dunkerque à Manille
De Londres à Varsovie
De Strasbourg à Paris»

Alain Grandbois (1948)

«Était-ce à Montréal à Paris à Amsterdam
À Copenhague à Florence peut-être»

Jean-Guy Pilon (1960)

«this is a beautiful game
caro mio
words words words
nous sommes dianétiques ce soir
dans un sombre tripot de Macao
dans tes yeux de diamant 24 carats
je vois passer des cargots suédois»

Yolande Villemaire (1983)

«Zapothèques Mixtèques ravages de l'oubli
ville funéraire à l'usage de son déclin
Monte Alban
du haut d'un escalier de pierre j'écris
ruines spectaculaires
ruines balayées de vent»

Claude Beausoleil (1983)

«Quelque part les cocotiers renoncent: pays du sapin,
Laurentides Tropicales.
(Orange street dans la mémoire, pyramides de citrons, sueur où
vivent les mirages)»

Pierre Nepveu (1977)

«L'horizon se catapulte derrière les feuillages
tropicaux et asiatiques: Montréal aura eu raison de
Bangkok.»

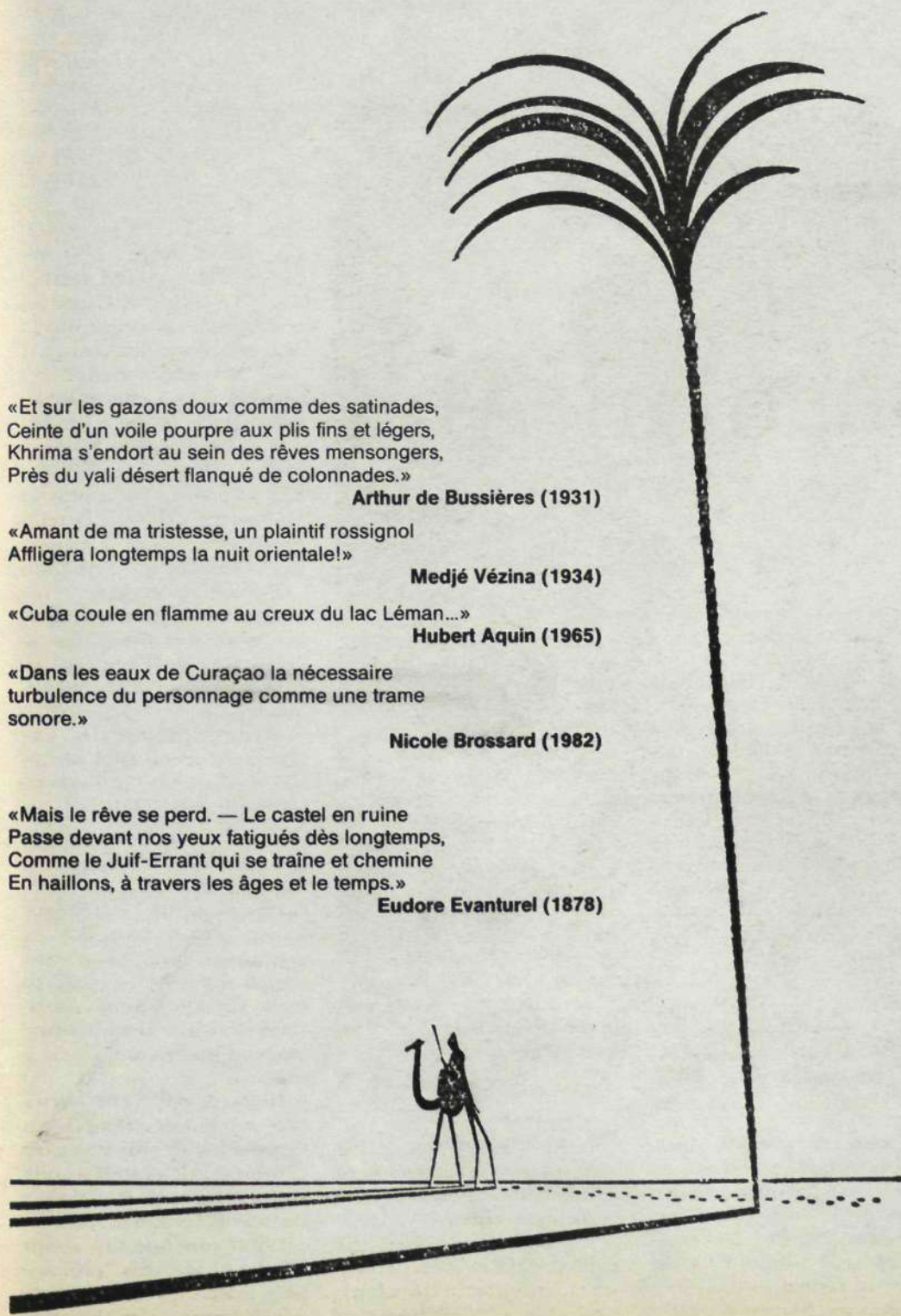
Jean-Paul Daoust (1983)

«La Madone aux yeux peints, en simarre de soie.....
Venise de tourment, de volupté, de joie!»

Paul Morin (1912)

«Je retourne à Katmandou. À pied. Un camion-citerne me prend
sur la route. Passagère silencieuse dans la cabine bariolée.
Bardée de formica. Comme une cuisine d'Abitibi.»

Louise Desjardins (1983)



«Et sur les gazons doux comme des satinades,
Ceinte d'un voile pourpre aux plis fins et légers,
Khrima s'endort au sein des rêves mensongers,
Près du yali désert flanqué de colonnades.»

Arthur de Bussièrès (1931)

«Amant de ma tristesse, un plaintif rossignol
Affligera longtemps la nuit orientale!»

Medjé Vézina (1934)

«Cuba coule en flamme au creux du lac Léman...»

Hubert Aquin (1965)

«Dans les eaux de Curaçao la nécessaire
turbulence du personnage comme une trame
sonore.»

Nicole Brossard (1982)

«Mais le rêve se perd. — Le castel en ruine
Passe devant nos yeux fatigués dès longtemps,
Comme le Juif-Errant qui se traîne et chemine
En haillons, à travers les âges et le temps.»

Eudore Evanturel (1878)

In Search of a Lost Culture

by Bruno Ramirez

Bryan D. Palmer, *Working-Class Experience: The Rise and Reconstitution of Canadian Labour, 1800-1980* (Butterworth & Co. Ltd., 1983).

It is one of the ironies of our time that while official statistics announce the eclipse of the industrial worker from the centre-stage of economic life, studies on the history of the industrial working class have been proliferating at an unprecedented pace. In Canada, as in many other Western countries, this irony has been rendered even more painful by the massive wave of industrial restructurings, which, through robotization and computerization of work processes, represent the most insidious threat to industrial workers in the history of modern capitalism. So, while the working class is "fragmented", "segmented", "reconverted", or "diluted" (to use some of the most current expressions) our knowledge of its historical experience is becoming deeper and more refined. We owe it largely to a new vintage of Canadian historical writing for having managed to go beyond trade-union history and having placed the working class at the centre of Canadian social, economic and political life.

The "new" Canadian labour historians are far from being a homogeneous lot, but many of them have drawn their initial inspiration from the works of the English historian Edward P. Thompson and of American historians Herbert Gutman and David Montgomery, and have applied — often very

creatively — their conceptual insights to the Canadian context.

To be sure, many of them write with the *Communist Manifesto* in the back of their minds; but unlike the traditional marxist labour historiography, where the working class was often a mere theoretical abstraction or a sort of raw material to be shaped by a real or alleged revolutionary party, the new historical production sees the working class as a historical actor capable of autonomous collective action. The advent of industrial capitalism in Canada saw not only the transformation of peasants, farmers, artisans, and fishermen into wage-earners; it also witnessed the resistance of this nascent social class to the tyranny that the new system of production imposed on people's life. The patterns of resistance may have varied in time and place, but in each of them, culture acted as a resource that workers autonomously shaped according to their needs, thus giving meaning and symbolism to their vision of a just society.

Bryan Palmer is a leading representative of this approach. In his *Working-Class Experience*, he has performed two major tasks in one: he has brought together into one work of synthesis a historical production that lay scattered in scientific journals, monographs and dissertation archives. Secondly, he has skillfully cast this diverse material into a marxist/culturalist mold, thus granting much credibility to the approach he represents.

The task Palmer has undertaken was not an easy one: Canadian capitalism, much like its American counterpart, has set its roots on a greatly diversified geo-cultural terrain, rendered even more so by the successive waves of immigrants — each bringing with it particular brands of culture and *mentalités*.

To talk, then, of working-class culture — in the singular — may strike one as superficial if not artificial. One soon realizes, however, that the culture Palmer discusses is one that was activated by the expropriating action of industrial capitalism, the expropriation of time, of social relations, and — even worse — the expropriation of a vision of a just society.

This is partly why the strongest sections of the book are those covering the period 1850 to 1895, during which the forces of industrial capitalism swept Canada from coast to coast, engendering forms of working-class resistance that rapidly converged into a unified oppositional movement. The Knights of Labor (an organization born in Pennsylvania and that rapidly spread with the tide of industrialism throughout North America) emerge in these pages as the most authentic expression of working-class solidarity. Their hegemony on the late 19th-century Canadian Labour universe was exercised not only at the workplace, but also in leisure activities and in the community at large.

It is as if for a moment the marxist notion of the "collec-

tive worker" ceased to be an abstraction and concretized itself in a movement of real people who struggled to rid society of company bosses, money-hungry financiers, and crooked politicians.

The Twentieth century would not witness similar periods of class confrontation, despite the periodic resurgence of industrial conflict; and the "movement culture" that sustained workers in their struggles of the 1880s and 1890s will gradually disappear. Clearly something must have gone wrong, for the new century brought a major expansion of the industrial working class within Canadian society, and the gains made by organized labour on the institutional front were considerable.

Palmer covers eight decades of history, up to 1980, looking in vain for that ingredient (i.e., an autonomous working-class culture) that would have transformed the working class into a unified entity; he only finds feeble echoes of a collective memory. He is right in pointing to the advent of mass culture as the new, insidious force undermining working-class culture cohesion; and he resorts to categories such as "fragmentation" and "segmentation" to show some of the mechanisms capital has unleashed to divide the working class and undermine its collective power.

But we learn little that has not been rehearsed in the periodic public lamentations on the decline of labour militancy. In vain, for instance, one tries to understand how the

20th-century trade-union movement may have promoted or weakened an autonomous working-class culture. No doubts, Palmer has done a great job at showing the historicity of the category "working-class culture" in the context of the late 19th century. But his treatment of this category is at best uncritical.

He does not discuss how the "producer's ideology" articulated by the labour movement implied also an ideology of the "reproducers" (i.e., women) which helped sanction the place of women where capital wanted it most, thus making sexism a constant ingredient of working-class cultural behavior.

Nor does Palmer seem equipped to explain why the most visible moments of cultural vigor in recent capitalist history were activated by social groups (youth, women, students) whose struggles had little to do with "productive labour" and with the ideological and value systems built around it.

Palmer feels that the revitalization of the Canadian labour movement can only occur if this movement is capable of producing a working-class culture of the type the Knights of Labor produced during their heyday. But then one cannot help but see in this stance a mystifying use of the category "working-class culture", and the signs of a theoretical impasse in the face of the historic transformations capitalism is bringing about around us all. □

An Italian-Canadian Anthology

by Maria Redi

Italian Canadian Voices: An Anthology of Poetry and Prose (1946-1983) edited by Caroline M. Di Giovanni. Oakville, Ont. Mosaic Press, 1984

This is one of the most important literary publications of 1984, but sadly it has gone unnoticed. To quote Marco Micone, we are still "le gens du silence." I have seen no reviews of this collection and I have not been able to find it in Toronto book stores, though it has been in print since May 1984. I finally had to go to the Centro Scuola office in the Columbus Centre to get my copy (901 Lawrence Ave., W., M6A 1C3). I hope that readers in Montreal, Vancouver and Edmonton are able to get copies of *Italian Canadian Voices*.

A good deal of credit is due to the editor Caroline Di Giovanni for making this the most representative collection

of Italian-Canadian writing to be published. In 1978 Pier Giorgio Di Cicco brought out *Roman Candles*; the poetry sections in *Italian Canadian Voices* can be seen as an update to Di Cicco's pioneer work.

The former group of poets: Mary di Michele, Len Gasparini, Mary Melfi, Filippo Salvatore, Saro D'Agostino, Tony Pignataro, Antonino Mazza and Alex Amprimoz has been expanded by the inclusion of Italian-language poets, Romano Perticarini and Gianni Grohovaz.

The format is bilingual, for all the Italian work excellent English versions are provided. New poems as well as old ones are printed and so we get some idea of Di Cicco's poetic development from "Italy, 1974," to "Flying Deeper Into the Century." Different regions of Canada are represented as well as a number of women writers.

The most interesting aspect of the anthology, for me, is the inclusion of an early writer, Mario Duliani. This almost-forgotten figure was publishing in French and Italian in the Montreal of the 1930's and '40's. The prose included by Di Giovanni is varied: short stories by C.D. Minni, Caterina Edwards, Gianni Bartocci and chapters from novels: F.G. Paci's *Black Madonna*, Maria Ardizzi's *Made in Italy*, and Edwards' *The Lion's Mouth*.

Work by many other writers is included: George Amabile, Matilde Torres, Celestino Deluliis and Antonio D'Alfonso, but one would have liked more writers to be added: Marco Fraticelli, Antonio Corea, Frank Zingrone, Mike Zizis, Silvano Zamaro, Pasquale Verdicio, Giovanni di Lullo, Ermanno La Riccia and the late Tonio Caticchio. I am sure the editor had to make some very difficult deci-

sions.

With the exception of Duliani's "Nocturne" from *La ville sans femmes*, and a few poems by Amprimoz there is no French work included in this volume. It seems that you must turn to *Quêtes*, the collection edited by Fulvio Caccia and Antonio d'Alfonso to sample the Italo-québécois writers. Nevertheless this is a very impressive collection, the writing is of high quality and the introduction by Di Giovanni and the bibliography by Joseph Pivato is very useful.

The thematic arrangement of the material and the inclusion of notes make this volume suitable as a textbook for literature courses, Canadian Literature, Ethnic Studies, or Italian-Canadian Studies.

After *Italian Canadian Voices* I look forward to reading more work by these talented writers. I have already bought copies of Mary di Michele's *Necessary Sugar*, F.G. Paci's *The Father* and Maria

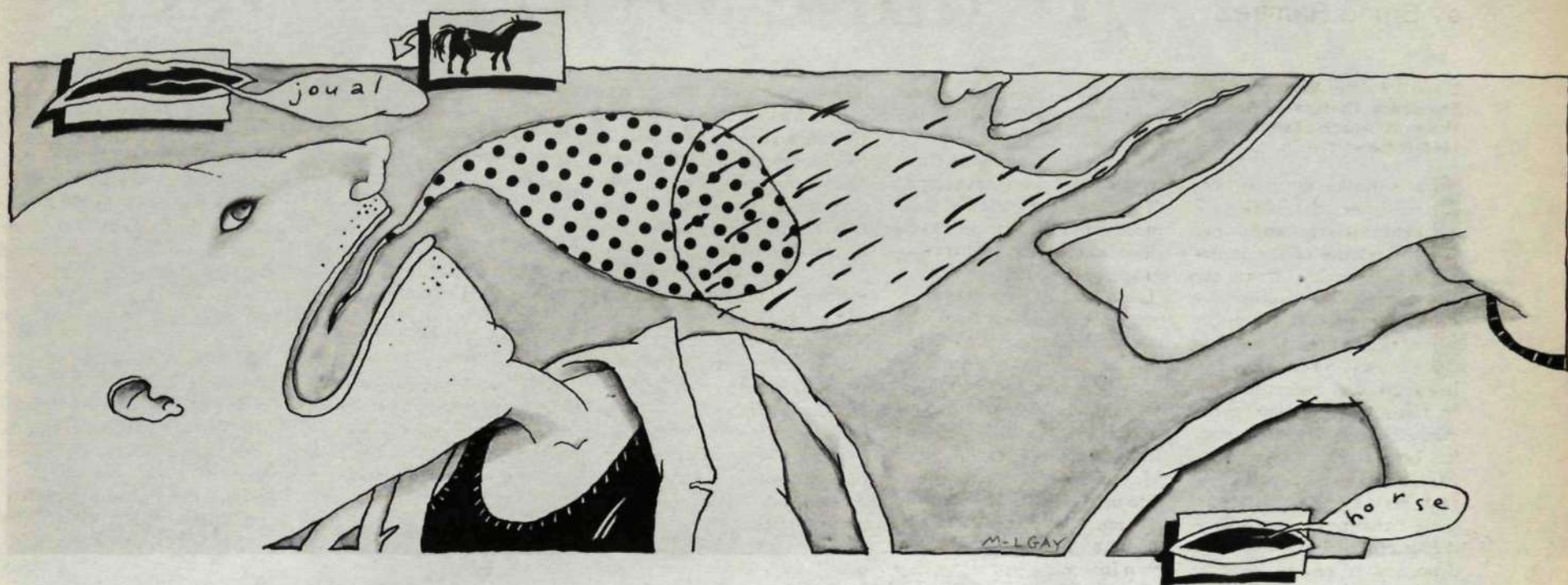
Ardizzi's *Il sapore agro della mia terra*. I also hope to see collections of short stories by C.D. Minni and Caterina Edwards.

My over all impression of the book is best captured by the words of Joseph Pivato from the preface to *Italian Canadian Voices*.

This small selection of work by Canadian writers of Italian background is both an introduction to their writing and a tribute to their creative achievement. One reason for the success and the appeal of the work by these writers is the immediacy of the human experience they record.

In many cases it is the immigrant experience in Canada that is striking and that is accessible not only to Italian-Canadians but to people from many other backgrounds. The validity of an experience shared by so many different people is upheld by the self recognition found in the writing itself. □

The Way They Talk in Broke City



Drawing by Marie-Louise Gay

by David Homel

In the summer of 1963, an angry, depressed young man named Jacques Renaud checked into a furnished room on the rue Cherrier in Montreal, and after three days of writing at white heat, produced a short novel entitled *Le cassé — Broke City*, in the English version that appeared 20 years later. There isn't much to the *Broke City* plot: a young lumpen named Johnny tries to hold onto his equally down-and-out girlfriend Mena, loses her to a rival (so he thinks), kills the rival and continues his wanderings through a Montreal that is truly *cassé*. What was outstanding about the book, besides its out-and-out violence and nihilism, was the language in which it was written. Renaud chose to write in *joual*, the working-class French dialect of East End Montreal, and in so doing, along with writers like André Major and Claude Jasmin, he helped launch the *joual* movement that was to pave the way for Michel Tremblay and a whole new literary identity for Quebec. Finally, it seemed, Quebec was to have its own distinct literary language. (*Joual*, by the way, is *joual* pronunciation for the French word *cheval*, meaning «horse.») This movement set off a debate on whether dialect can be a literary language. And, in the Canadian context, translators had to face the problem of how to put that language into English.

With the energies developing during the unquiet era of the Quiet Revolution, it was inevitable that *joual* would burst upon the scene as a literary language, if only because of the censorship it had always been subjected to. *Joual* had always been considered an inferior dialect, a sub-language, a stigmata of a people going nowhere, and it was attacked by religious and civil authorities (who were more often than not one and the

same in Quebec). There were *campagnes de bien parler* (good grammar campaigns) and the slogan *bien parler, c'est se respecter* (speaking well is a sign of self-respect) was concocted. So with the rise of leftist nationalist sentiments in the late 1950s and 1960s, it was no surprise that certain writers would want to celebrate *joual* as a literary language by dint of creating works in it.

First, a few words about *joual*. It is a simple recipe. Take standard Quebec French, increase the diphthongization, make the grammar remarkably flexible and add a healthy dose of Anglicisms — or better, Americanisms. It's this latter addition that gives *joual* its special savour and creates monumental problems for those brave and foolish souls who try to put a *joualizing* work into English. For not only does *joual* accept English words into its lexicon, it also distorts them once they are inside, in a kind of sabotage action against a linguistic occupying force. *Pushing in joual* is not «pushing» in English; *stépinés* (step-ins) becomes the word for «panties»; such strange and wonderful cases abound.

But this linguistic sabotage, though amusing for collectors of odd morphemes, is not the heart of the Anglicism problem in *joual*. Take a simple Renaud sentence: *Il s'est assis sur le tchesteurfilde*. He sat on the sofa. Yet this straightforward (and perfectly correct) English rendering does not and cannot render the socio-linguistic complex present in this short sentence. Why Renaud saying *tchesteurfilde* instead of the standard French *divan*? And what does it mean when he does? What is the difference of meaning between these two terms that both refer to something you sit on? And what do we do with this state of affairs when we want to translate into English?

In Quebec, since the 1760s,

English has been the dominating language and, up until recently, the language of domination. Nowhere is this clearer than in *joual*, in a sense the linguistic nerve centre of Quebec society. English invades French, not the other way around. The fact that we speakers of English say *tête-à-tête* or *crêpes suzette* or, on an etymological level, «government» is nothing compared to the density of foreign influence in *joual*. Speakers of *joual* will say *Il a pogné un flatte* or *Elle l'a pitché dehors* or *Il est sur le chômage, il bomme*, not because French words for these English terms don't exist, but because these English words better betray the domination, both economic and linguistic, under which these people live. And, in passing, it is no accident that most Anglicisms refer to actions of violence or desparation.

What does the translator do when he or she decides to put a *joual* book into English? The first thing to realize is that the act is impossible. English influences and alters French in North America, not the other way around. Domination is always a one-way street. There is no adequate translation for the domination and linguistic and economic poverty lurking in the simple sentence *Il s'est assis sur le tchesteurfilde*. Of course, translating *joual* may be only slightly more impossible than translating any other work of literature, and with that rationale firmly in mind, I decided to take a stab, so to speak, at Renaud's *Le cassé* (*Broke City*, Guernica Editions, Montreal, 1984). Like the southern U.S. writer Bob Houston has said, we don't write dialect, we represent it, and like the writer, the translator has to make a choice of dialects to stand for *joual*, and unfortunately, none of the preexistent choices seems to work. The main character named Johnny in *Broke City* is a northern white and his ancestors have been in the

country for 300 or 400 years, so black, southern U.S., rural, immigrant and Atlantic dialects are out of the question. So are any other ones you can name. I ended up opting for a generalized, big-city, working-class, northern, white dialect, the speech of people who have a lot of emotions to express and no words to express them in, whose frustrations predictably lead to anti-social expressions. As I was preparing to work on *Broke City*, out of the past came the recollection of a grade school teacher who chastized us with these words when we used «ain't» or some other equally guilty ungrammatical expression: «If you can't speak well, you shouldn't speak at all.» It is to her that I should have dedicated this translation.

Along the way I discarded the other possibility of creating a new English dialect that would have been the geographical and social equivalent of *joual*. I could have gone down to the taverns along Wellington Street in Point St. Charles and Verdun on a Saturday night, kept my mouth shut and my ears open and built a dialect around what English-speaking people, the equivalents of Renaud's Ti-Jean in the East End, would say. I suspect that, had I done this piece of research, the language of *Broke City* would not have been very different than what it is now. But I rejected this option precisely because it was *research*, a concocted language, and I wanted to get as close as possible to the white-heat conditions under which Jacques Renaud wrote the work. But whatever way a translator chooses, *il s'est assis sur le tchesteurfilde* is still «he sat down on the sofa»; there's not much more that can be done to capture the domination and despair in that simple phrase.

In 1967, Renaud said of the language he used, «*Joual* is the language of both submission and revolt, of anger and impotence. It's a non-lan-

guage, a denunciation.» *Joual* is language against itself. In that contradiction is contained the paradox of *joual* and, indeed, that of other similar dialects, like *el pocho*, spoken along the Mexican-American border. (*Pocho*, interestingly enough, means «faded» in Mexican, as if speakers of this English-flavoured dialect have somehow lost their original colour). How much can anyone say using the language of people who have traditionally had nothing to say, who have been too far down the social ladder and too weighted with frustrations to even make works of art? How much elbow room does the writer have when he or she decides to inhabit totally the universe of *joual*? Is it even fair to use the language of a group of people for whom this very language is a sign of humiliation and poverty and isolation? Renaud himself became aware of this problem in the years that followed. But like all good paradoxes, there is no clear solution to these questions. It probably is true that once the liberating effect of *joual* was felt, once this language, so typically *québécois* in its contradictions, was celebrated and moved closer to the mainstream, it became less imperative to write in it. Michel Tremblay's use of *joual* in the 1980s is anything but shocking and revolutionary and, Jacques Renaud has since abandoned that extremist language for something more meditative, which is not necessarily a progression in the moral or aesthetic sense, but more like an inevitability. This seems to be the lesson of recent Quebec literary history: *joual* was the manifestation of a key historical moment for Quebec writing, but at present, one would turn no heads by writing in it. It has truly become a literary language. Is this the banalization or the apotheosis of *joual*? Probably neither. It is more like a society accepting itself and making literature out of its own speech. □

D.A.F.: A German Minimalist Duo and its Weltanschauung

by Christian Roy

A unique and fascinating musical experiment has come to an end last winter with the disbanding of the electronic "hardcore" group D.A.F., a duo that consisted of Bavarian Robert Görl and Spaniard Gabi Delgado Lopez. D.A.F. stands for *Deutsch-Amerikanische Freundschaft*, "German-American Friendship". The biting irony of this provocative name shows the spirit of anti-Americanism in which the group was founded in Düsseldorf in the late seventies. This basic orientation was made plain on the group's first album, *Nr. 00001 — Ein Produkt der Deutsch-Amerikanischen Freundschaft* (Warning Records, 1979), where nightmarish industrial noise is simulated with traditional rock instruments; on the cover, one can see the Prussian eagle of the coat of arms of Germany crucified in a frame with tacks, its head replaced by the crown of the statue of Liberty, and the letters D.A.F. inscribed on its chest...

In 1980, Gabi Delgado brought his distinctive stentorian vocals to a by then clearly punk-sounding D.A.F. for the group's second LP, *Die Kleinen und die Bösen* ("The Little and the Wicked", Mute Records). His lyrics added to D.A.F.'s basic anti-industrial slant a particular concern for the eroticism lost in the crippling of sex by the imperatives of production, that would eventually inspire about half of D.A.F.'s songs. Dominating the group's entire output however is the repudiation of the official ideal of "*Lebensstandardssteigerung — schnelle Produktion für die schnelle Republik*" ("Increase of living standard — fast production for the fast Republic") denounced in the overpowering song "*Nacht Arbeit*" ("Work by night"). D.A.F. is thus the heir to the great German tradition of protest against bourgeois industrial values that goes back to the Romantics and has been represented in our century by the gangs of young *Wandervögel* ("migratory birds") who fled the cities of Wilhelmian Germany for a nomadic life in the wild, and the free-corps of demobilized soldiers who subverted the



Weimar Republic.

Under the Bonn Republic (yet another creature of the bourgeois West), this tradition is best preserved not, as one might think, in the terrorism of groupuscules of puritanical middle-class youths more or less sold out to Moscow, nor even in the mawkish histrionics of ecologists à la *Rousseau*, but rather in the immorality of D.A.F. (as well, doubtless, as the amorality of Kraftwerk). This immorality dismisses the values of the Soviet East along with those of the American West, alien (and alienating) as they all are to the teutonic *Mittel-Europa*. This is signified from the outset on the ironic mode (albeit with music disturbingly evoking a gradual escalation of tension) in the first song of *Die Kleinen und die Bösen*:
 Der Osten währt am längsten.
 (bis...)
 Und der Osten ist am besten.
 Und der Westen ist am besten.
 Der Luxus ist im Westen.
 Der Westen ist zufrieden.

Er leckt sich seine Wunden.
 Und der Luxus ist im Westen.
 Doch der Osten währt am längsten.
 Der Osten währt am längsten.
 Der Osten ist am besten.
 Der Westen ist am besten.

The East will prevail.
 And the East is better off.
 And the West is better off.
 Luxury is in the West.
 The West is satisfied.
 It licks its wounds.
 And luxury is in the West.
 But the East will prevail.
 The East will prevail.
 The East is better off.
 The West is better off.

Alles ist gut

One can already detect here a wicked enjoyment taken in the spectacle of the antagonism of ideologies that are theoretically opposed but practically interchangeable. This aesthetics of the overcoming of opposites was to characterize the mature output of D.A.F., once the group had shed most of its members, boiling down to its veteran Robert Görl on percussion and synthesizer and Gabi Del-

gado on vocals. "*Der Mussolini*" is a good example of this aesthetics they began to develop on their first "classic" album, *Alles ist gut* (Virgin Records, 1981):

Geh in die Knie.
 Wackle mit den Hüften.
 Klatsch in die Hände.
 Und tanz den Mussolini.
 Dreh dich nach rechts.
 Tanz den Adolf Hitler.
 Beweg deinen Hintern.
 Dreh dich nach links.
 Und tanz den Jesus Christus.
 Tanz den Kommunismus...

Bend your knee.
 Waggle with your hips.
 Clap your hands.
 Dance the Mussolini.
 Turn to your right.
 Dance the Adolf Hitler.
 Shake your buttocks.
 Turn to your left.
 And dance the Jesus Christ.
 Dance the Communism...

The theme of "*Alle gegen alle*" is similar, but throws light on the positive content of this metamoral dialectics:
 Unsere Kleidung ist so schwarz.
 Unsere Stiefel sind so schön.

Unsere Farben sind so grell.
 Links den roten Blitz.
 Rechts den schwarzen Stern.
 Unsere Schreie sind so laut.
 Unser Tanz ist so wild.
 Ein neuer böser Tanz.
 Alle gegen alle. Alle gegen alle...

Our gear is so black.
 Our boots are so beautiful.
 Our colours are so glaring.
 On our left the red lightning.
 On our right the black star.
 Our shouts are so loud.
 Our dance is so wild.
 A new evil dance.
 Everyone against everyone...

There is little irony to find here. The hellish, relentless rhythm of the music forbids it anyway. It is the very principle of the Judeo-Christian, social Good that is trampled by these fake SS-men slam-dancing in the dark. They seem to be acting out the teachings of the most rigorous theorist of Anarchism, Max Stirner, the author of *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* ("The Ego and his Own"), who a century and a half ago proclaimed: "The people is dead, longlive Me!" — And down with the moral constructs that would smother Me by denying that everything is good, as D.A.F. in turn professes:

Sei still. Schliesse deine Augen.
 Bitte denk an nichts. Glaube mir.
 Alles ist gut. Alles ist gut...

Be quiet. Close your eyes.
 Please think of nothing. Believe me.
 Everything is good. (bis...)

And yet, last summer Gabi Delgado Lopez warned a reporter from *Impulse* that "the things that I express opinions about don't belong to a school of thought." Indeed, there are such hidden commonplaces as appear to the lucid people of all times, places, and conditions.

Beyond Good and Evil

Thus Shakespeare was saying precisely the same thing as D.A.F. in "*Alles ist gut*" when he put this reflexion in Hamlet's mouth (II, 2): "(...) for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: (...)" Nevertheless, D.A.F. does follow a line of thinking described by Gabi as "the most important development in terms of what's happening here" (in Germany): "people saying 'no' to some of the effects of intense industrialization. It's not a hippie thing; it's more like

what we call 'eine neue Innerlichkeit', which means the people are self-aware and reject thinking in terms of polarities of good and evil. They do what they must do." To become what one is in the full awareness of one's self beyond good and evil: this "new subjectivity" is clearly reminiscent of Nietzsche, whose individualist concerns finds a revealing echo in Gabi's embarrassment about the fact that some of his songs have become anthems for young German demonstrators: "I've never liked a hundred thousand people singing the same words, whether it be Communists, or Nazis, or a youth movement. I don't like it when the identity of the individual is reduced in the mass. I am suspicious of people singing the same words. I don't like ideologies." But: "I just don't think in terms of 'enemies' or 'friends', which allows Gabi to use fascist imagery in his exaltation of the individual, to recuperate totalitarian energies to make them serve what they usually annihilate: the Ego, who comes out on top of this synthesis of Anarchy and Fascism, illustrated on *black* album covers where Gabi Delgado and Robert Görl strike arrogant poses...

Me and Reality

This is particularly apparent on the cover of the group's next album, *Gold und Liebe* ("Gold and Love", 1981), where Görl and Gabi sport black leather gear without sleeves, revealing muscles of which they are obviously quite proud. A number of songs on the "dark side" of the record are indeed glorifications of physical force: "*Muskel*" ("Muscles"), "*Absolute Körperkontrolle*" ("Absolute body control"; no vocals, just electric pulsations evoking those of nerves), and the awesomely powerful "*Verschwen-de deine Jugend*" ("Waste your youth"), an admonition with distinct Stirnerian and Nietzschean overtones: "Take all you want as long as you can. Do what you will. You are good-looking! and young! and strong! Waste your youth as long as you're young." And what then? This problem had been foreseen on *Alles ist gut* and had been given a Futurist-sounding solution in the song "*Verlier nicht den Kopf*" ("Don't lose your head"): "Never go back. Never look back. Look only ahead. You are so young (and strong, and good-looking). (...) Don't lose your head." But this is an impossible challenge, despite possible (im)moral applications of these words; hence the note of frantic despair that makes "*Verschwen-de deine Jugend*" so disturbing. The abortive attempt at conquering time evoked in this song is therefore followed by an assault against space, "*Greif nach den Sternen*" ("Reach for the stars"; "The whole Earth and all the stars are yours..."), that was prefigured in the very first song of *Alles ist gut*, "Sato-sato":

Habt keine Angst.
Habt keine Angst meine Kinder.
Schwitzt meine Kinder.
Verbrennt euch die Hände.
Kämpft um die Sonne.
Sato-sato. Sato-sato.

Have no fear.
Have no fear my children.

Sweat my children.
Burn your hands.
Fight for the sun.
Sato-sato.

Thus was introduced to a probable following of mere protesters a Promethean asceticism of insurrection (to paraphrase Camus on Stirner) ending up in a dereliction that had for all that been at its origin, illustrated as it was in the first song of the first song of the strictly "existential" side of *Alles ist gut*, "*Ich und die Wirklichkeit*", which sums up the whole trauma of modernity as post-Tradition and radical ontological uprooting: Ich... und ich... im wirklichen... Leben.
Ich... und ich... in der... Wirklichkeit.
Ich fühle mich so seltsam. (bis, bis...)
Die Wirklichkeit kommt. (bis, bis...)

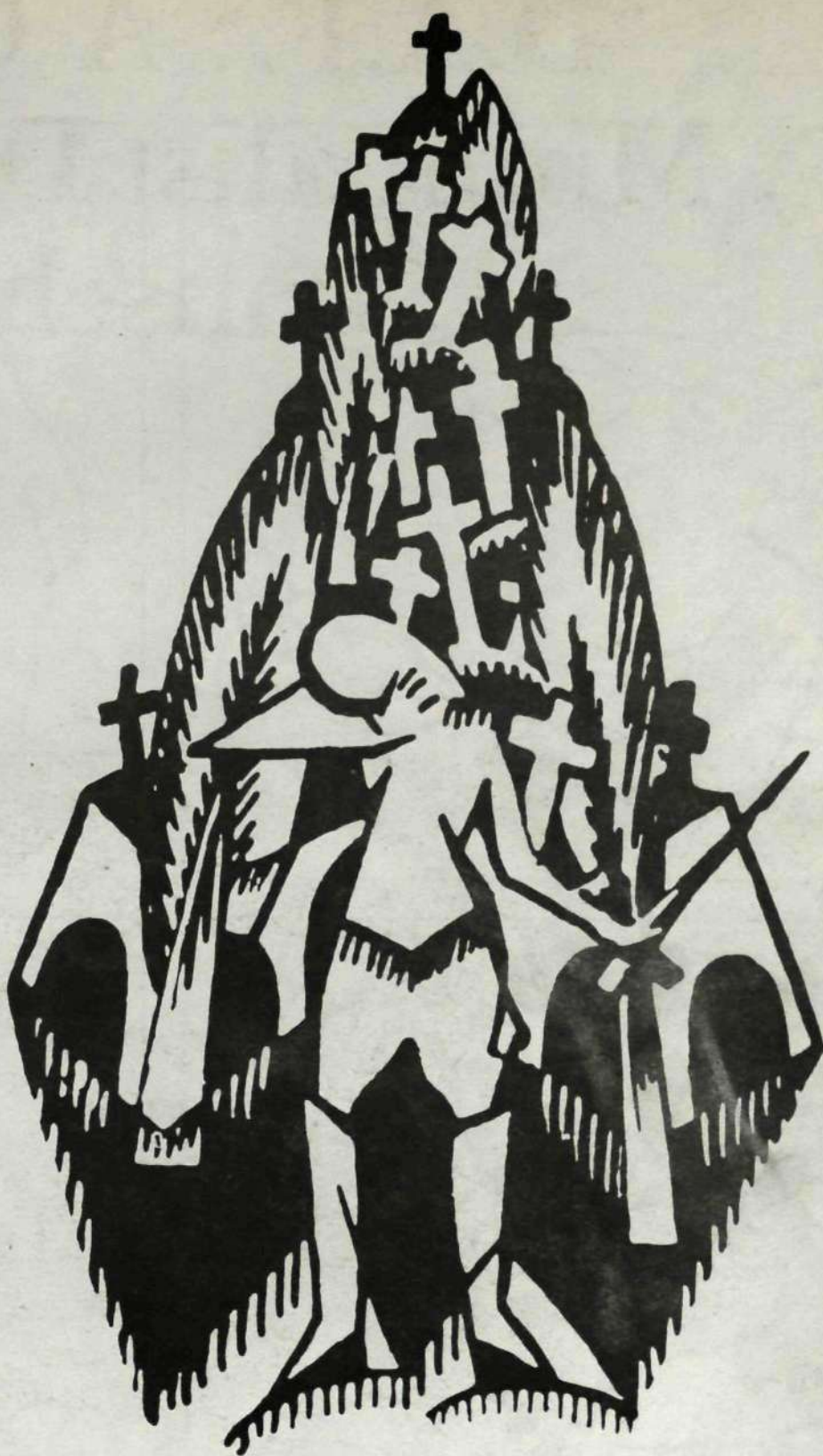
Me... and me... in real life.
Me... and me... in re-a-li-ty.
I feel so strange, (bis...)
Reality is coming (bis...)

The next song however, on music quickened by the energy of despair and even more disturbing than the breathless, oppressive mood of *Ich und die Wirklichkeit*, points to a possible way out of this problematic reality whose approach is so threatening: "*Als wär's das letzte Mal*" ("As if it was the last time") depicts exacerbated eroticism as a fortress of human dignity assailed by industrial civilization. One is led here to a thought that evokes that of the Eternal Return: "To desire the eternity of desire is to give back to desire its power of affirmation beyond all concupiscence and all negativity", as Claude Lévesque says in an essay on Nietzsche, *Le puits d'éternité*.

Forever...

D.A.F.'s last album, ironically entitled *Für immer* ("Forever", 1982), starts out in the same erotic vein with "*Im Dschungel der Liebe*" ("In the jungle of Love"), and taps again the old "fascistoid" one in the next two songs ("*Ein bisschen Krieg*", "A little war"; "*Die Götter sind weiss*", "The Gods are white"), before veering into the new joyful irony of such songs as "*Wer schön sein will, muss leiden*" ("One must suffer in order to be beautiful", "because suffering... is beautiful!"), in sharp contrast with the bitter irony of *Die Kleinen und die Bösen*, and even the cynicism of the mature albums. This innocent air pervades the three love songs of *Für immer*, and the words to *Prinzessin* even use straightforward fairy tale imagery, not twisting it as in the earlier "*Der Räuber und der Prinz*" ("The Robber and the Prince", in which the latter is seduced by the former...): "I am the pirate, and you the princess. I want to abduct you, and seduce you, oh princess. I am the conqueror, the hero, the general. I kill dragons, just for you, oh princess..."

But as Nietzsche writes: "Who is the great dragon whom the spirit can no longer call master and god? This great dragon is called 'You should'. But the spirit of the lion says 'I will'." Thus spake Zoroaster of the three metamorphoses, and that the spirit of D.A.F. has gone through them becomes apparent when



Thus New Wave as existential style appears as a new dandyism, still egocentric and saturated with sentimentality, or even an openly girlish sensibility like that of a Boy George... to mention but the best known of countless instances of sexual ambiguity among the idols of youth...

one thinks that the first song of the "dark side" of *Gold und Liebe* was called "*Ich will*"; when one remembers the camel-like moralism of *Nr. 00001* and *Die Kleinen und die Bösen*; and when one realizes that the leonine immoralism of *Alles ist gut* and *Gold und Liebe* recedes before the "holy Yea-saying" of *Für immer* — the child-like innocence of Becoming restored after the heavy thought of the otherness of reality: "*Ich und die Wirklichkeit*".

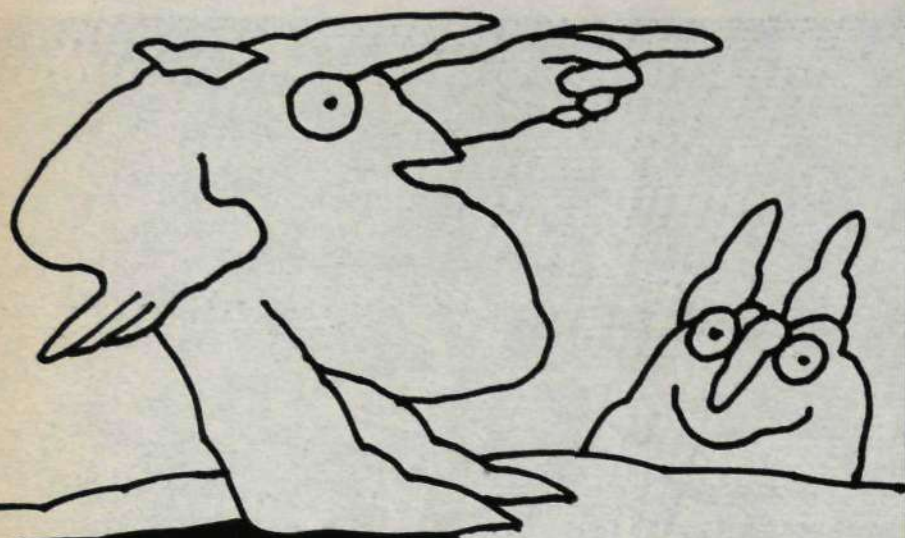
The Nietzschean role that D.A.F. has played in this late XXth century when the bourgeois cycle of world history is coming to an end should also become apparent when one thinks that today's popular music, in its more articulate forms, expresses a *Zeitgeist* parallel to that developed by

the decadent intelligentsia of the late XIXth century and the expiring aristocratic cycle, but at the lower social and cultural level of that which defines today's *Zeitgeist*. Thus new wave as existential style appears as a new dandyism, still egocentric and saturated with sentimentality, or even an openly girlish sensibility like that of a Boy George, to mention but the best known of countless instances of sexual ambiguity among the idols of youth since the first manifestations of éonism of the forerunner David Bowie. Alongside this nonetheless not always tasteless revival of *fin de siècle* decadence, the punker reiterate with the energy of despair the revolt of the anarchists of the last century, but slam-dances instead of throwing bombs, because unlike

his spiritual ancestors he knows that there is nothing to hope for. (What indeed is there to hope for from a proletarian cycle, a mass-man's paradise which probably could not even end with an interesting twilight, unlike former cycles?)

Sailing clear of both elegant complacency and dreary nihilism, D.A.F., like Nietzsche, has distilled the *fin de siècle Zeitgeist's* purest essence, a terrific tonic that makes us confront the times and fill their vacuum with the freed Ego, whose imperialism is eventually superseded by another impulse affirming its limits, their necessity, even Necessity itself — amor fati: "Denn Leiden... ist schön!" "Und alles ist gut." ("For pain... is beautiful!") "And everything is good.") □

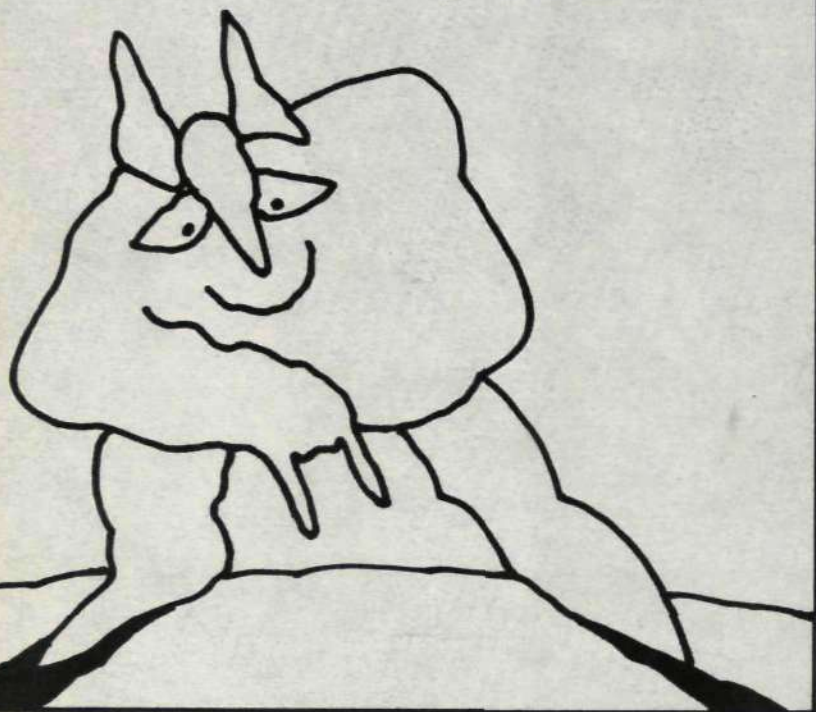
ORIZZONTE..ORIZZONTE...!!!



...E PERCHÉ
GUARDIAMO SEMPRE
ALL'ORIZZONTE !!



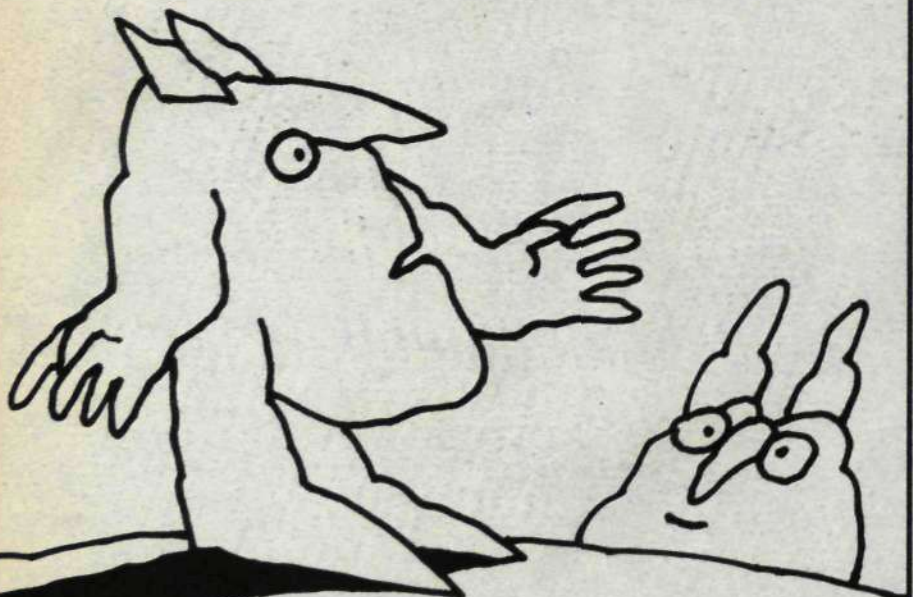
LA TERRA É QUI AI
MIEI PIEDI...



...E SOPRA
L'INFINITO !!!



E TUTTI TUTTI GUARDANO SEMPRE
ALL'ORIZZONTE !!



FORSE
PENSANO IN
UNA MANIERA
LINEARE !!

